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ABSTRACT

A survey collected baseline data about public housing communities and residents just prior to the start of the Jobs-Plus program. The data were from all working-age, nondisabled heads of households in eight public housing developments in seven cities with customarily high rates of joblessness and reliance on welfare. The developments were part of the Jobs-Plus Community Revitalization Initiative for Public Housing Families, a research demonstration project to improve residents' employment and quality-of-life outcomes. Findings revealed a more extensive and varied connection to the labor market than expected; slightly more than 90 percent of respondents had worked at some point; a majority were currently employed or searching for work; many worked only part-time; the majority were employed in low-wage jobs with no fringe benefits; health status was the factor most clearly associated with residents' engagement in the labor market; even with extensive data, it was difficult to create statistical profiles that accurately differentiate survey respondents who can be characterized as easier to employ from harder to employ; and across a wide range of measures (including demographic characteristics, incidence of domestic violence, and residents' social networks), no consistent patterns emerged to distinguish which residents were

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most and least actively involved in the labor market. (Contains 21 references.) (YLB)

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The Employment Experiences of Public Housing Residents

Findings from the Jobs-Plus Baseline Survey

John M. Martinez

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Overview

Public housing residents are commonly thought to be harder to employ than other low-income working-age populations, but detailed evidence on their actual employment experiences and difficulties is scarce. The dearth of information can hinder efforts by policymakers and administrators to reduce the high rates of poverty, joblessness, and related social problems found in many public housing developments across the country.

This report helps to address the information gap by analyzing data from a special survey of residents in eight public housing developments (in seven cities) with customarily high rates of joblessness and reliance on welfare. These developments have been part of the Jobs-Plus Community Revitalization Initiative for Public Housing Families, an ambitious research demonstration project that aims to improve residents' employment and quality-of-life outcomes. The survey, undertaken to collect baseline data about the communities and their residents just prior to the start of the Jobs-Plus program, sheds important light on how closely residents were already connected to the labor market, what kinds of jobs they obtained, and why some residents worked or looked for work less than other residents.

Key Findings

- The survey of residents revealed a more extensive and varied connection to the labor market than had been expected, given the very low rates of employment that characterized the public housing developments in the years prior to their selection for Jobs-Plus in the mid-1990s. Slightly more than 90 percent had worked at some point in their lives, and a majority were either currently employed or searching for work at the time of the survey.

- Many residents who worked did so only part time, and the majority were employed in low-wage jobs paying less than $7.75 per hour and offering no fringe benefits.

- Health status was the factor most clearly associated with residents' engagement in the labor market. Survey respondents who described themselves as having health problems were less likely than others to have had recent work experience or to engage in job search activities.

- Even with extensive data, it is difficult to create statistical profiles that accurately differentiate survey respondents who can be characterized as easier to employ from those who are harder to employ. Across a wide range of measures — including demographic characteristics, incidence of domestic violence, and residents' social networks — no consistent patterns emerged to distinguish which residents were most actively and least actively involved in the labor market.

Building on these new insights into public housing residents' relationship to the labor market, future studies will explore how financial incentives, employment services, and the reinforcement of community supports for work can increase residents' success in the labor market.

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Preface

Policymakers have come to focus increasingly on how best to promote employment and economic self-sufficiency among public housing residents. However, there has been little evidence to help them frame the problem and craft effective solutions. The Jobs-Plus Community Revitalization Initiative for Public Housing Families, the demonstration project under which this report was prepared, will provide this badly needed information and guidance. Originally implemented in eight public housing developments in seven cities across the nation, Jobs-Plus hopes to increase employment rates in the targeted developments by providing on-site employment services, creating rent policies that help make work pay, and undertaking community-building efforts.

This report documents the job search efforts, work experiences, and barriers to employment faced by public housing residents living in the Jobs-Plus developments. It also presents a useful snapshot of the residents' personal circumstances and labor market connections — the very things the Jobs-Plus designers set out to improve — and a resource for the program's administrators to draw on as they work with Jobs-Plus participants.

Although intended principally to provide baseline information on a population of public housing residents, the report's findings also have broader relevance. Not readily available from other studies, the unusually rich and complex data presented in this report highlight aspects of the lives of low-income people that may be of distinct value to policymakers and program administrators who work with other populations that confront a similar array of challenges to achieving self-sufficiency.

Gordon Berlin
Senior Vice President

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At MDRC, the oversight, feedback, and invaluable support given by James Riccio, co-director of the Jobs-Plus demonstration, was instrumental to the completion of this work. Howard Bloom provided critical guidance on the report's conceptualization and analytic design. Nandita Verma and Pamela Morris were also important contributors to the brainstorming sessions that led to the final analysis plan. Gordon Berlin, Craig Howard, Alissa Gardenhire, Linda Kato, Louis Richman, and Nandita Verma reviewed early versions of this paper and offered helpful comments. Electra Small conducted the data analysis, with some early assistance provided by Jevon Nicholson. Kristin Feeley ably coordinated the entire report production process, with some initial coordination provided by Christine Barrow.

Bob Weber edited the report, and Stephanie Cowell oversaw its final production.

Finally, to the residents of the public housing developments who participated in the Jobs-Plus survey, thank you. Your contributions are sincerely appreciated.

The Author

Introduction

Many of the nation's public housing developments — often thought of as a safety net for families facing difficult economic challenges — have become communities where poverty and unemployment are commonplace. Highlighting this, nearly 54 percent of public housing development units in 1997 were in census tracts where more than 30 percent of the population had income below the poverty line.[1] Moreover, only about one-third of families who had children and were living in public housing developments had wages as their main source of income.[2] Recognizing the accompanying social problems associated with high rates of poverty and unemployment, policymakers have attempted to reverse these trends by creating legislation and funding programs that increase employment levels and reduce poverty within public housing developments. However, little is known about what really works to accomplish these goals, because few rigorous evaluations of interventions to assist public housing residents exist. Additionally, not much is known about the employment experiences and barriers to employment of public housing residents. Gaining better information about this population — including information about the challenges they face — could help policymakers, program planners, housing authority administrators, and other social service providers creatively address these problems.

To better understand employment issues in public housing, this report analyzes survey data collected as part of the Jobs-Plus Community Revitalization Initiative for Public Housing Families.[3,4] The report focuses on three dimensions of residents' connection to the labor market: (1) actual employment levels, (2) the types of jobs that the residents were obtaining, and (3) the job search efforts made by the residents. Moreover, to explore why some residents may have worked less or searched for work less than other residents, the report examines the relationship between these three dimensions of connection to the labor market and residents' characteristics, situations, and attitudes.

Jobs-Plus encourages public housing residents to become self-sufficient by promoting work through three program components: employment-related activities and services, financial incentives to make work pay, and community supports for work. By utilizing a "saturation-level approach" — in which every resident in the development is eligible to receive assistance from

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[1]Newman and Schnare, 1997.

[2]U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1998.

[3]More information about Jobs-Plus is provided below, in the section entitled "Data and Methods."

[4]Battelle Centers for Public Health Research and Evaluation assisted in the preparation of the survey and, with its subcontractor Decision Information Resources, Inc., administered it at most of the Jobs-Plus developments. Wilder Research Center translated the survey into Hmong and administered both the English and the Hmong versions at the St. Paul Jobs-Plus site.

the program — Jobs-Plus hopes to transform low-work, high-welfare housing developments into high-work, low-welfare developments.[5]

Originally, Jobs-Plus was launched in eight public housing developments in seven cities; it is now operating in six developments in five cities: Baltimore, Chattanooga, Dayton, Los Angeles, and St. Paul. The program was conceived jointly by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), The Rockefeller Foundation, and the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC), and it is funded mainly by HUD and The Rockefeller Foundation, with additional support from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Labor, the Joyce Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, the Surdna Foundation, the Northwest Area Foundation, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Stuart Foundation, the Washington Mutual Foundation, and BP.[6]

This report addresses the following important questions:

- How much did public housing residents work, and what kinds of jobs did they have?
- Why did some residents work less than other residents?
- Why did some residents engage in job search less than other residents?
- Is it possible to develop a statistical profile of the hardest-to-employ residents, allowing program administrators to target special assistance to those who may have the most difficulty getting and keeping jobs?

Answering these four key questions is important beyond describing public housing residents' specific employment patterns and barriers to employment. As mentioned above, many residents of public housing reside in high-poverty neighborhoods. Moreover, a substantial proportion of them are public assistance recipients; in the mid-1990s, about one-quarter of households that were receiving some type of HUD assistance were also receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).[7] Consequently, the issues discussed in this report are relevant to highly disadvantaged populations outside the realm of public housing. Therefore, this information is especially useful for policymakers and program operators who are targeting programs to extremely disadvantaged individuals and families as they move toward self-sufficiency.

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[5]For a fuller description of the Jobs-Plus program at specific sites, see Bloom (2001).

[6]For more information on the origins, goals, and research objectives of the Jobs-Plus demonstration, see Riccio (1999).

[7]Khadduri, Shroder, and Steffen, 1998.

Findings in Brief

Data in this analysis come from seven public housing developments across the country that were chosen to be part of the Jobs-Plus demonstration. In the initial selection of the developments in the mid-1990s, housing authority records showed that most residents were not working and that their rates of welfare receipt were high — characteristics that the researchers and administrators who developed Jobs-Plus thought made them well-suited to benefit from the targeted efforts to help residents that would constitute the Jobs-Plus approach. The subsequent survey of residents — conducted in 1999, near the peak of the economic expansion that reduced unemployment to near postwar lows — established the baseline data describing their labor market experiences.

This section briefly summarizes the report's key findings.

- **In this sample of public housing residents who were heads of households, there was substantial connection to the labor market.**

Nearly 90 percent of survey respondents had worked at some point in their lives, and about 56 percent were working at the time the survey was administered. This finding challenges the widespread conception that public housing residents are very disconnected from the labor market. It is also somewhat surprising, given the high proportion of residents who were not employed and not known to be seeking work when sites were initially selected.

- **Jobs held by these residents tended to be low-paying and without fringe benefits.**

Job quality — as measured by wage rate and receipt of employer-provided benefits (such as health insurance) — was poor. Slightly more than 20 percent of respondents earned less than $5.15 per hour, and nearly three-quarters earned less than $7.75 per hour; only half received any type of employer-provided benefits.

- **Respondents who had recent full-time employment (that is, who had worked full time within 12 months prior to the survey) had better-quality jobs than did those whose recent employment was part time.**

Respondents who had recent full-time employment were, on average, more likely than those who had recent part-time employment to earn more ($6.63 per hour, versus $5.78 per hour) and to receive any employer-provided benefits (60 percent, compared with 18 percent).

- **No consistent relationship was found between demographic characteristics and recent employment.**

Though respondents without recent employment were less likely to have a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate than respondents who

worked recently, other demographic measures — such as race/ethnicity and marital status — were not clearly and consistently related to the degree of labor market connection.

- **Health-related characteristics were consistently related to employment status.**

Respondents without recent employment were more likely to report negative health outcomes, and those who had recently worked full time were less likely to report such problems.

- **Social networks and social supports as measured in this study were not as clearly linked to recent employment status as expected, though further research is needed.**

Researchers hypothesized that social networks and social supports would be important factors in relation to labor market connection for these public housing residents. Though an interesting association was found between some subgroups and having many relatives or friends outside the development who worked full time within the prior year and who were sources of information for job leads, the analysis did not find a clear relationship with the limited set of measures available for this study.

- **For residents who were not employed at the time of the survey, some characteristics, particularly health, were related to job search efforts (defined as whether or not the resident actively engaged in job search in the four weeks prior to the survey).**

Respondents' health problems stood out as a significant impediment to looking for work. Among nonworking respondents, 46 percent of those who did not search for work — relative to 34 percent of those who did — reported having a condition that limited their ability to work or that limited the type of work they could do. Among other differences, nonworking respondents who searched for work were more likely to be single (never married) and to have a child younger than 18 in the household. They were also less likely to express concerns about traveling to and from work and about having their rent raised if they were able to find full-time employment.

- **Among residents who were employed at the time of the survey, those engaging in job search efforts were more likely than those not engaging in job search to report having low-paying jobs without fringe benefits, suggesting that they were looking for better-quality jobs.**

Employed residents who reported looking for another job in the four weeks before the survey were more likely to have been earning a lower hourly wage, less likely to have been receiving employer-provided benefits, and more likely to have had concerns about job security and to report that work hours constantly changed.

- **Other personal characteristics and circumstances of the respondents were not consistently related to employment status, suggesting that it would be difficult to develop a profile of the hard-to-employ.**

Clear and consistent relationships between respondents' characteristics and employment status are not evident based on measures of violence and safety, perceptions about the labor market, and measures of social networks and social support.

Background

Legislators and others have sought to address joblessness and poverty in public housing developments through the creation of innovative policies and programs. Most recently, the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998 sought to increase the number of working families within housing developments. By repealing federally mandated occupancy preferences that favored nonworkers and by establishing new rent policies to help "make work pay" (among other policy changes), legislators hoped to decrease the jobless rate and the poverty rate in public housing developments.

Past programs have identified self-sufficiency as a specific goal for public housing residents. For example, Project Self-Sufficiency — a demonstration project administered by HUD in the mid-1980s — encouraged collaboration among public and private entities within the community in order to provide integrated support services. It targeted underemployed or unemployed single parents and had an ultimate goal of self-sufficiency.[8] A more recent example is the Family Self-Sufficiency program, targeted largely to those receiving subsidies for private rental housing (that is, Section 8 vouchers).[9] This voluntary program — enacted in 1990 and still operating — encourages self-sufficiency through case management to facilitate employment goals (such as participation in skill-building activities) and through the use of escrow accounts. As rent increases due to increased earnings, the additional amount is deposited in an escrow account; these monies can than be used to purchase a home, to pay for work-related needs (for example, car repairs), or to pay for education or training programs. Supporters argue that this program could benefit not only public housing authorities who implement it but also residents who participate (through accumulation of assets and higher rates of employment and earnings).[10] However, evaluations of Project Self-Sufficiency and the Family Self-Sufficiency program have been limited, so it is not possible to definitively state either program's impacts on self-sufficiency. Moreover, studies of these programs to date have provided only limited details on the employment experiences of public housing residents.

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[8]Newman, 1999.

[9]Research by Sard (2001) has suggested that the Family Self-Sufficiency program is underutilized.

[10]Sard, 2001.

A small number of studies explore how the receipt of housing benefits affects participation in the labor force, especially among female heads of households with children.[11] Some of these studies report evidence that housing benefits do reduce work effort to some extent, but others do not. Moreover, some of these studies focus only on welfare recipients in assessing the influence of housing assistance, and others make no distinction between residents of public housing and recipients of Section 8 vouchers. In general, none of these studies delve deeply into the background characteristics, attitudes, and personal and social circumstances of public housing residents, which can affect their employment experiences. Nor do the studies shed much light on how success in the labor market and even efforts to look for work vary among different types of residents within public housing.

There is evidence, however, that certain characteristics may make some individuals less employable than others. Therefore, it is possible that, within public housing, some residents may be more disadvantaged than others in terms of finding and keeping jobs. Many of the kinds of variables associated with being more successful or less successful in the labor market have been investigated in other studies, though not necessarily within a public housing population.

One study looked more narrowly at public housing residents in Atlanta, Georgia.[12] The researchers found that welfare recipients living in public housing were substantially more disadvantaged relative to those in unsubsidized private housing. For example, they found that, at the end of the follow-up period, recipients in public housing were statistically less likely to be employed and more likely to have lower earnings, to have received more in welfare payments, and to still be receiving AFDC or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

The Jobs-Plus demonstration provides an unusual opportunity to look more closely at how these issues affect a public housing population. Data from the demonstration include information — collected prior to the implementation of Jobs-Plus — about the employment experiences of a sample of public housing residents. The next section describes in more detail the Jobs-Plus housing developments, the survey, and the methods used for this report.

Data and Methods

The survey used in this analysis was administered to all working-age, nondisabled heads of household who had resided in one of the Jobs-Plus housing developments for at least

[11] See, for example, Currie and Yelowitz, 1998; Fischer, 2000; Miller, 1998; Ong, 1998; Painter, 1997; Reingold, 1997; and Riccio and Orenstein, 2001.

[12] Riccio and Orenstein, 2001.

six months. The survey was administered in early 1999, prior to implementation of the program. At start-up, Jobs-Plus was launched in eight developments in seven cities:[13]

- Gilmor Homes in Baltimore, Maryland
- Harriet Tubman Homes in Chattanooga, Tennessee
- Woodhill Homes Estates in Cleveland, Ohio
- DeSoto Bass Courts in Dayton, Ohio
- Imperial Courts and William Mead Homes, both in Los Angeles, California
- Mt. Airy Homes in St. Paul, Minnesota
- Rainier Vista in Seattle, Washington

Since implementation of the program, several changes have occurred. Woodhill Homes Estates in Cleveland withdrew from the Jobs-Plus demonstration in 1999, although some program-related activities continued there.[14] In addition, Seattle's Rainier Vista has become a HOPE VI site, meaning that it has received a federal grant to tear down and rebuild the development that originally housed Jobs-Plus. Though no longer part of the national demonstration, this site continues to operate a Jobs-Plus program.[15] Inasmuch as the purpose of this report is to describe employment-related characteristics *prior to implementation of Jobs-Plus*, all eight sites are included in the analysis, with some exceptions relating to Mt. Airy Homes. Residents of this development in St. Paul were surveyed nearly one year later than residents in the other sites, and a slightly different survey instrument was used (to accommodate the development's large Hmong-speaking population); these factors make it difficult to line up many data items with the other sites.[16] For these reasons, Mt. Airy Homes is included in only some of the analyses, and footnotes on tables indicate whether St. Paul is included or not.

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[13]While most depictions of public housing are of large, high-rise towers arrayed in huge complexes, the developments participating in Jobs-Plus are varied in construction and composition. In fact, only one of them (Mt. Airy Homes) contains high-rise units, and the largest development (Gilmor Homes) has approximately 500 units in its low-rise complex.

[14]Several local factors contributed to a shift in the interests of Cleveland's housing authority, making it infeasible for the agency to support an employment demonstration that is limited to a single housing development.

[15]MDRC is now evaluating the Seattle site separately from the other sites in the national Jobs-Plus demonstration.

[16]Some items that did not translate easily into Hmong were either modified or omitted from the survey in St. Paul. In addition, because the translation required more words in Hmong than in English to express the same idea, some items had to be omitted in order to maintain the targeted time for each interview. The delay in

(continued)

The Jobs-Plus survey achieved a response rate of 82 percent[17] and covered such topics as community life, children, participation in education and training services, physical health, and material and psychosocial well-being. The survey also gathered extensive information about respondents' employment patterns, job-related characteristics, and perceptions. All told, the survey provides a rich and detailed picture of employment experiences — and barriers to employment — in public housing developments.

Understanding Employment Patterns Among Public Housing Residents

An assumption sometimes made about public housing residents is that they have little connection to the labor market, thereby making public assistance their primary source of income. In fact, the sites seeking to be a part of the Jobs-Plus demonstration had to have a development-level employment rate of no greater than 30 percent at the time of application (1996). Also, no less than 40 percent of the residents could be receiving AFDC. But how much did residents actually work, at what kinds of jobs, and how steadily? How much did they rely on welfare? How poor were they?

How Many Residents Worked?

Given the foregoing criteria for inclusion in the Jobs-Plus demonstration, the nonemployment rate (defined as the proportion of residents who were not working and not known to be looking for work) was expected to be high, and residents' connection to the labor market was expected to be low. However, as Figure 1 shows, the vast majority of survey respondents (90 percent) had worked at some point in their lives. This challenges the assumption that public housing residents are not very connected to the labor market — even in housing developments known to have high rates of joblessness at any given time. Moreover, "recent employment" (defined as employment within the 12 months prior to the survey) was also higher than expected, although it is important to note that this may reflect, in part, the marked improvement in the economy in the 1990s after employment data had been gathered by the housing authorities for their Jobs-Plus applications. Some 69 percent of the survey respondents reported that they had worked within the prior 12 months, and 56 percent reported that they were currently employed. Another 21 percent reported not having worked within the 12-month period, though they had

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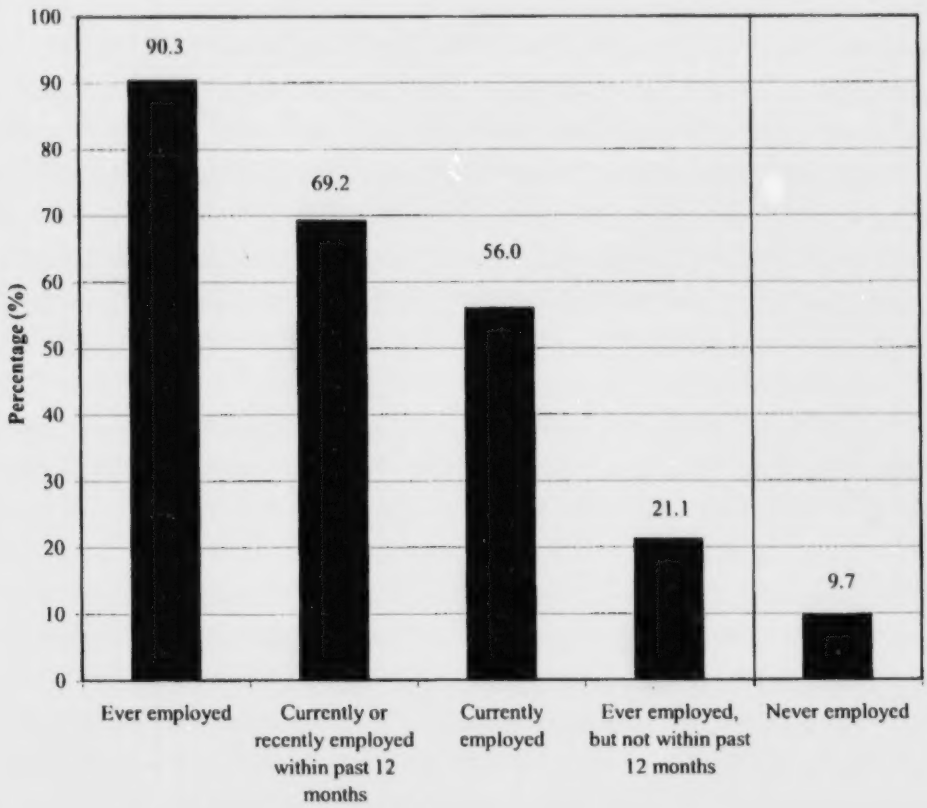
administering the survey in St. Paul resulted from concerns early on that Mt. Airy Homes might not continue in the Jobs-Plus demonstration.

[17]This response rate does not include St. Paul, where the response rate was 84 percent.

Figure 1

Current and Past Employment Status of Jobs-Plus Survey Respondents



SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Jobs-Plus baseline survey.

NOTES: These calculations include respondents from the St. Paul, MN, Jobs-Plus site.
Sample sizes range from 1,681 to 1,689.

worked at some point in their life. Taken together, this means that less than 10 percent of the respondents had never worked — again highlighting the high level of past or current connection to the labor market.

What Types of Jobs Were Residents Obtaining?

As Figure 2 shows, the majority of survey respondents who had recent employment had worked in full-time jobs (69 percent) as opposed to part-time jobs (31 percent).[18] However, additional analysis suggests that the types of jobs they were obtaining were of low quality, as defined by wage rate and receipt of employer-provided benefits. Nearly 21 percent of respondents earned less than $5.15 per hour (the federal minimum wage at the time of the survey) at their current or most recent job, and the vast majority (73 percent) earned less than $7.75 per hour. More than half did not receive any type of employer-provided benefits, such as health insurance or paid sick days.

Additionally, working respondents expressed concerns about certain aspects of their current or most recent job. Nearly 43 percent cited a concern about the health or safety risk of the job; 27 percent thought that poor job security was an issue; and 55 percent said that constantly changing hours were a concern.

Respondents were asked to describe the type of position that they had in their current or most recent job. Sifting through the list of titles gives a flavor of the types of jobs residents were obtaining: babysitting/child care, cashier, housekeeping (cleaning), nurse's assistant/nurse's aide, and security-related jobs (not shown in exhibits).

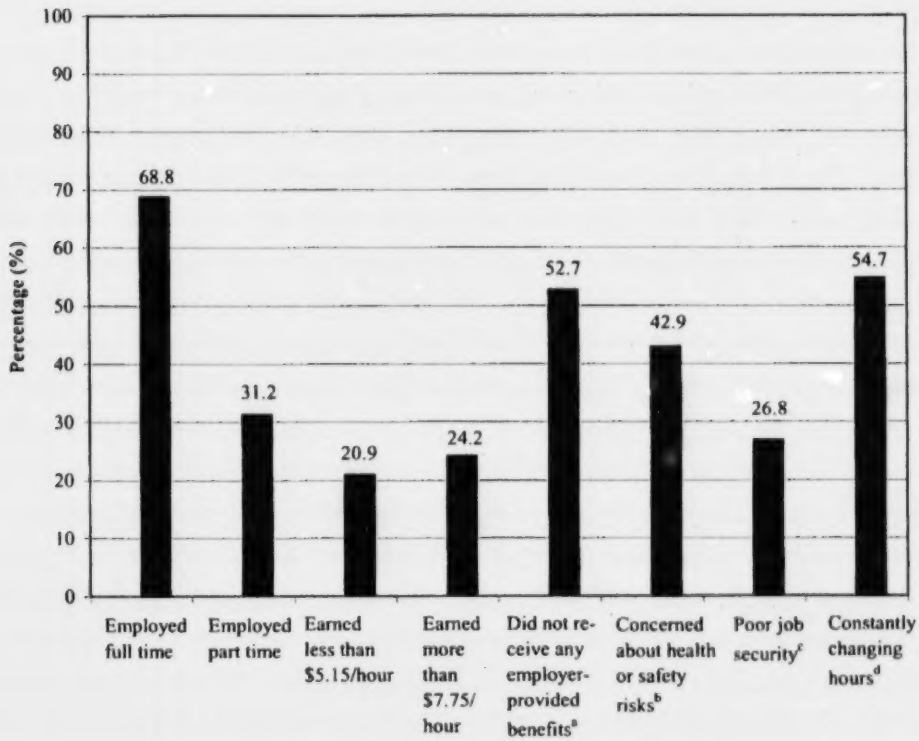
How Did the Characteristics of Full-Time Jobs Differ from Those of Part-Time Jobs?

Table 1 shows, not surprisingly, that the characteristics of respondents' jobs differed depending on whether the jobs were full time or part time. (Respondents who did not work within the year prior to survey administration were not asked questions related to job characteristics and are therefore not included in this table's data.) In general, recent full-time jobs were of better quality than recent part-time jobs. As is shown in Table 1, respondents with recent full-time employment reported earning more per hour than those with recent part-time experience ($6.63 versus $5.78). At the low end of the wage spectrum, about three times as many respon-

[18] "Full-time work" was defined as working more than 30 hours per week. For the purposes of this analysis, a hierarchy of work experience was utilized. A resident who had worked at both a full-time job and a part-time job in the previous 12 months was included in the category "recent full-time employment," since this suggests more of a connection to the labor market.

Figure 2

Characteristics of Current or Most Recent Job Reported by Jobs-Plus Survey Respondents



SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Jobs-Plus baseline survey.

NOTES: Characteristics of current or most recent jobs were not assessed for respondents whose most recent job was more than 12 months prior to the survey.

These calculations include respondents from the St. Paul, MN, Jobs-Plus site.

Sample size for the above questions ranges from 1,052 to 1,681.

[a]Employer-provided benefits included health plans for respondent or respondent's children, paid sick days, or paid vacation days.

[b]Respondents who stated that the following was true or very true: "You risked your health or safety doing this work."

[c]Respondents who stated that the following was true or very true: "The job security was good; that is, you could pretty much count on having this work."

[d]Respondents who stated that the following was true or very true: "The number of hours you worked each week was always changing."

Table 1

Characteristics of the Most Recent Job Held by Jobs-Plus Survey Respondents Who Worked Within One Year of the Survey, by Employment History

Characteristic	Employed Within Past Year, Full Time	Employed Within Past Year, Part Time
Percentage of full sample[a]	68.8	31.2
Currently employed (%)	81.9	82.5
Average number of hours worked per week	39.6	18.3 ***
Average hourly wage ($)	6.63	5.78 ***
Less than $5.15 (%)	14.4	40.5 ***
$5.15 - $7.75 (%)	62.9	41.1 ***
More than $7.75 (%)	22.6	18.4
Employer-provided benefits (%)		
Any benefits	59.8	17.6 ***
Health plan for self	38.4	12.7 ***
Health plan for children	52.0	10.6 ***
Paid sick days	40.7	8.5 ***
Paid vacation days	31.7	5.7 ***
Respondent perceived[b] (%)		
Health or safety risk	45.1	36.5 ***
Poor job security[c]	23.3	34.2 ***
Constantly changing hours[d]	50.2	63.5 ***
Sample size	731	332

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Jobs-Plus baseline survey.

NOTES: The stars indicate statistically significant differences across the employment groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * = 10 percent; ** = 5 percent; *** = 1 percent.

These calculations do not include respondents from the St. Paul, MN, Jobs-Plus site.

Full-time work was defined as working more than 30 hours per week. For the purposes of this analysis, a hierarchy of work experience was utilized. If residents had worked both a full-time job and a part-time job in the previous 12 months, they were included in the recent full-time employment group.

[a]Total sample size = 1,063.

[b]Respondents who stated that the following was true or very true: "You risked your health or safety doing this work."

[c]Respondents who stated that the following was true or very true: "The job security was good; that is, you could pretty much count on having this work."

[d]Respondents who stated that the following was true or very true: "The number of hours you worked each week was always changing."

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dents who were working part time earned less than the federal minimum wage ($5.15 per hour) as those with full-time jobs (41 percent versus 14 percent).

Aside from paying more per hour, full-time jobs were also much more likely to provide fringe benefits. Nearly 60 percent of respondents working full time reported receiving some type of employer-provided benefit, compared with about 18 percent of those working part time. About three times as many full-time as part-time workers reported receiving a health plan for themselves, and about five to six times as many reported receiving a health plan for their children, paid sick days, or paid vacation days.

Those working full time were more likely than part-time workers to perceive that their current or most recent job posed a health or safety risk (45 percent versus 37 percent), suggesting that full-time jobs were perceived as being more dangerous. However, proportionally fewer full-time than part-time workers thought that their current or most recent job had poor job security (23 percent versus 34 percent) or constantly changing hours (50 percent versus 64 percent), suggesting that the full-time jobs may have been more stable.

All in all, these findings suggest that employment programs like Jobs-Plus should highlight the advantages of full-time work when guiding public housing residents in making labor market decisions.

Household Income, Tenure in Public Housing, and Receipt of Public Benefits

Survey respondents were asked a series of questions related to income sources and amounts of household income. These data point out how disadvantaged these residents were. As is seen in Figure 3, about 44 percent reported income of $5,000 or less per year. The vast majority had income of less than $20,000 per year — only 5 percent of respondents reported income that exceeded this amount.[19]

As Figure 4 shows, nearly 55 percent of respondents reported that someone in the household received welfare in the prior 12 months, and 69 percent reported a household member who received food stamps — suggesting the importance of government income supports to these residents despite their relatively high connection to the labor market. Respondents were also asked about their prior experiences with welfare and public housing: 34 percent stated that they grew up in a household where someone received welfare, and 42 percent reported growing up in public housing.

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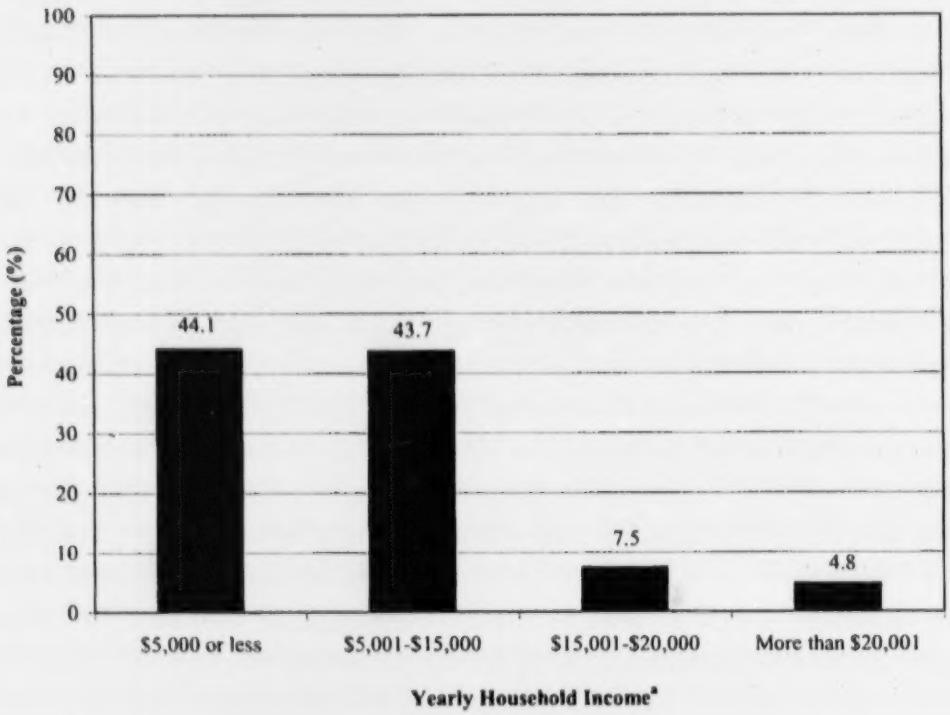
[19]Survey respondents were asked whether the total yearly household income fell into the following ranges: less than $5,000; greater than $5,000 and less than $10,000; greater than $10,000 and less than $15,000; greater than $15,000 and less than $20,000; greater than $20,000 and less than $25,000; and greater than $25,000.

Figure 3

Income Levels of Jobs-Plus Survey Respondents' Households



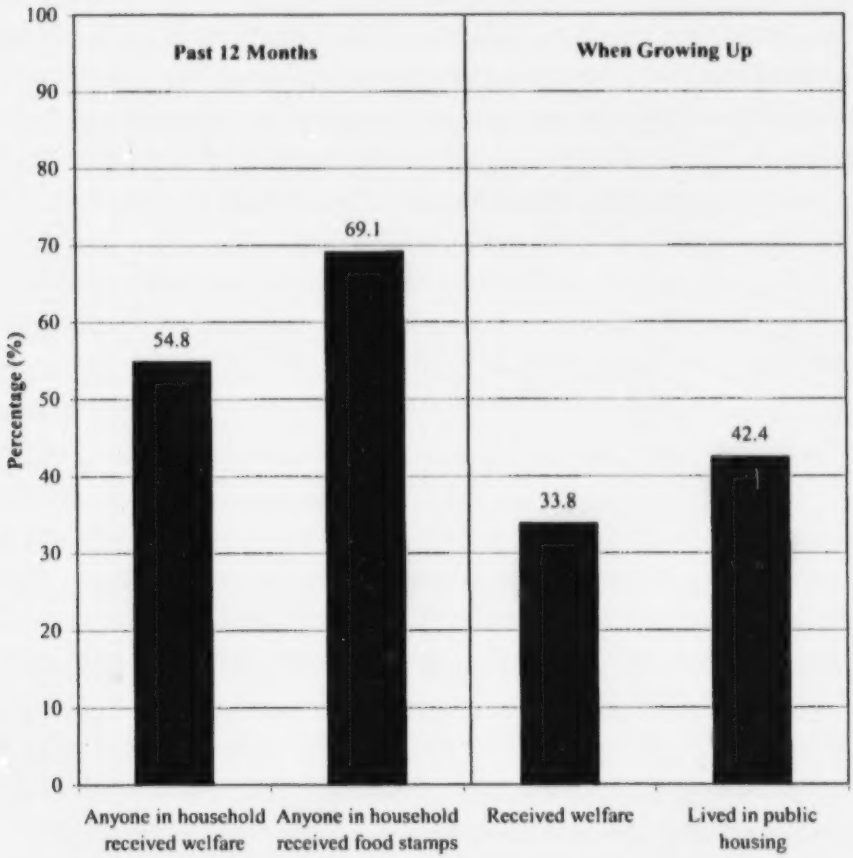
SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Jobs-Plus baseline survey.

NOTES: These calculations include respondents from the St. Paul, MN, Jobs-Plus site.
Sample size = 1,583.

[a]Survey respondents were asked whether the total yearly household income fell into the following ranges: less than $5,000; greater than $5,000 and less than $10,000; greater than $10,000 and less than $15,000; greater than $15,000 and less than $20,000; greater than $20,000 and less than $25,000; and greater than $25,000. For the purposes of this analysis, the income ranges greater than $5,000 and less than $10,000, and greater than $10,000 and less than $15,000, were collapsed into "$5,001 - $15,000." All responses greater than $20,000 were collapsed into "More than $20,001."

Figure 4

Receipt of Public Benefits by Jobs-Plus Survey Respondents



SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Jobs-Plus baseline survey.

NOTES: These calculations include respondents from the St. Paul, MN, Jobs-Plus site.
Sample sizes range from 1,503 to 1,653.

Do Residents' Employment Patterns Vary by Site?

It might be possible that many of the differences in respondents' employment experiences reflect systematic differences across the eight housing developments. For example, perhaps most respondents who had full-time jobs with benefits were living in site A, while most of those who had part-time jobs and no benefits were living in site B. If this were the case, it would suggest that the employment experiences described in the foregoing sections are not generalizable across the housing developments in the diverse set of cities included in the demonstration. It would also suggest that the differences in respondents' experiences were larger across (rather than within) the places where they lived.

Table 2 presents the characteristics discussed above for each of the sites.[20] As is shown, the proportion of respondents currently employed ranged from a low of 49 percent in Los Angeles (Imperial Courts) to a high of 61 percent in Dayton. St. Paul had the highest average hourly wage ($8.72), and Chattanooga had the lowest ($5.34). As is evident across the remainder of variables presented, there was considerable cross-site variation in employment experiences and outcomes, though no consistent pattern emerged; that is, no site was consistently better or worse on most measures.

Taken together, the data presented so far in this report show that most of these public housing residents — though very disadvantaged — had some current or prior connection to the labor market. Yet most were in low-wage, unstable jobs with few employer-provided benefits. At the same time, the variations in their labor market experiences are considerable and are not explained simply by which site their housing development was in. The next section examines employment patterns more closely to determine whether certain characteristics and circumstances of respondents help to explain why some of them were more connected to the labor market than others.

Understanding Why Employment Varied Among Residents

Introduction

Given the substantial variation among respondents in terms of the nature and degree of their connection to the labor market, it is possible to divide the sample into four *employment subgroups* according to how much respondents worked (that is, full time or part time) and how recently. For this analysis, the sample is divided in the following way: those recently employed

[20]Tables in the Appendix present a range of characteristics across the sites.

Table 2

Characteristics of the Most Recent Job Held by Jobs-Plus Survey Respondents, by Site

Characteristic	All[a]	Baltimore: Gilmor Homes	Chattanooga: Harriet Tubman Homes	Cleveland: Woodhill Homes	Dayton: DeSoto Bass Courts	Los Angeles: Imperial Courts	Los Angeles: William Mead Homes	St. Paul: Mt. Airy Homes	Seattle: Rainier Vista
Employment history (%)									
Recent full-time job	48.6 ***	43.3	61.9	47.8	59.8	33.2	43.2	56.2	43.1
Recent part-time job	20.0 ***	24.9	16.3	25.1	17.4	28.4	22.9	9.8	15.6
Ever employed, but not within past 12 months	20.6 ***	29.0	15.8	22.7	18.7	27.9	22.0	10.5	18.1
Currently employed (%)	55.6	52.8	59.5	56.0	61.0	49.0	60.3	52.9	53.1
Average hours worked per week	22.9 ***	21.4	27.1	24.2	26.9	18.2	21.3	24.7	19.2
Average hourly wage[a] ($)	6.67 ***	6.09	5.34	6.60	6.19	6.51	6.51	8.72	7.42
Less than $5.15 (%)	20.1 ***	26.4	27.6	24.5	19.9	31.0	15.1	4.1	12.4
$5.15 - $7.75 (%)	53.1 ***	57.6	67.1	50.3	65.7	41.4	63.0	32.7	47.2
More than $7.75 (%)	26.8 ***	16.0	5.3	25.2	14.5	27.6	21.9	63.3	40.4
Yearly household income[b] (%)									
$5,000 or less	42.2 ***	56.9	68.0	54.1	48.2	40.5	33.3	8.2	27.9
$5,001-$10,000	29.6 ***	21.3	19.4	24.9	26.3	37.4	31.5	34.9	40.9
$10,001-$15,000	15.3 ***	13.9	6.3	10.3	16.2	10.3	20.1	24.7	20.8
$15,001-$20,000	7.8 ***	5.0	4.4	8.2	3.5	6.7	10.0	17.1	7.8
$20,001-$25,000	2.1 ***	0.5	1.5	1.3	2.6	1.0	1.8	7.5	0.6
More than $25,001	3.0 ***	2.5	0.5	1.3	3.1	4.1	3.2	7.5	1.9
Benefit receipt (%)									
Anyone in household receiving welfare, past 12 months	54.8 ***	47.9	53.5	51.4	59.2	76.4	50.0	n/a	43.9
Anyone in household receiving food stamps, past 12 months	69.1 ***	68.4	85.4	66.5	71.5	77.5	56.5	n/a	55.7
Employer-provided benefits[a] (%)									
Any benefits	48.6 ***	41.9	55.4	37.4	49.7	34.4	43.6	63.4	62.8
Health plan for self	31.0 ***	26.4	31.9	22.2	30.8	25.2	24.5	37.4	50.0
Health plan for children	40.7 ***	37.2	45.7	31.3	40.2	25.0	41.3	54.5	50.5
Paid sick days	32.6 ***	23.1	39.3	25.8	33.5	21.9	23.1	47.5	46.8
Paid vacation days	25.1 ***	22.1	33.1	20.8	29.7	18.8	14.8	36.0	25.5

(continued)

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Table 2 (continued)

Characteristic	All[a]	Baltimore: Gilmor Homes	Chattanooga: Harriet Tubman Homes	Cleveland: Woodhill Homes Estates	Dayton: DeSoto Bass Courts	Los Angeles: Imperial Courts	Los Angeles: William Mead Homes	St. Paul: Mt. Airy Homes	Seattle: Rainier Vista
Respondent perceived[c,d] (%)									
Health or safety risk[e]	42.3	37.8	46.1	42.5	43.8	44.9	48.7	n/a	31.9
Poor job security[f]	26.9	28.6	25.3	26.5	23.8	35.7	25.8	n/a	22.8
Constantly changing hours[g]	54.3	56.1	54.5	56.7	56.8	56.3	51.9	n/a	47.9
Sample size	1,689	218	220	252	241	208	237	153	160

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Jobs-Plus baseline survey.

NOTES: The stars indicate statistically significant differences across the developments. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * = 10 percent; ** = 5 percent; *** = 1 percent.

Full-time work was defined as working more than 30 hours per week. For the purposes of this analysis, a hierarchy of work experience was utilized. If residents had worked both a full-time job and a part-time job in the previous 12 months, they were included in the recent full-time employment group.

[a]The "all" column presents the average of the averages across the eight developments rather than a true average across all respondents. This was a methodological decision intended to weight the contribution of each site to the overall average equally.

[b]Respondents were asked to think of all the income sources for everyone inthe household, including themselves, and were then read a series of ranges of income to assess the approximate household income. For example, the range $5,001-$10,000 presented above would actually be greater than $5,000 and less than $10,000.

[c]These questions were asked of only those respondents who had worked within one year of the survey (sample size = 1,058).

[d]Respondents in St. Paul were not asked these questions.

[e]Respondents who stated that the following was true or very true: "You risked your health or safety doing this work."

[f]Respondents who stated that the following was true or very true: "The job security was good; that is, you could pretty much count on having this work."

[g]Respondents who stated that the following was true or very true: "The number of hours you worked each week was always changing."

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full-time (the most connected), those recently employed part time, those who have had a job at some point but not within the prior 12 months, and those who have never worked.

Figure 5 presents the distribution of the sample across these four employment subgroups. As is shown, although many respondents did manage to enter the labor market before the implementation of Jobs-Plus, a substantial number had not worked recently (about 21 percent), and some had never worked at all (nearly 10 percent). What distinguished those who were more connected to the labor market from those who were less connected? In particular, do the kinds of factors that are posited to predict employment connection in other samples of low-income populations explain the variation in this sample of public housing residents? Do the patterns suggest any kind of "profile"? That is, is it possible to establish a statistical profile that would easily identify the hardest-to-employ residents? Factors that will be assessed include not only demographic characteristics — which are generally believed to be related to difficulty in entering and remaining in the labor market — but also personal circumstances (such as residents' health and labor market perceptions) and factors attributed to the housing development (such as respondents' perceptions of safety and various items attempting to measure aspects of social capital among residents).

Although it is important and interesting to better understand the fourth subgroup — residents who have never worked — they make up only a small proportion of the full sample (about 10 percent) and have inconsistent profiles. Therefore, notable findings related to them will be discussed separately, at the end of this section. Their data are included in the tables so that comparisons can be made with the other three employment subgroups, but respondents who never worked will not be discussed in detail.

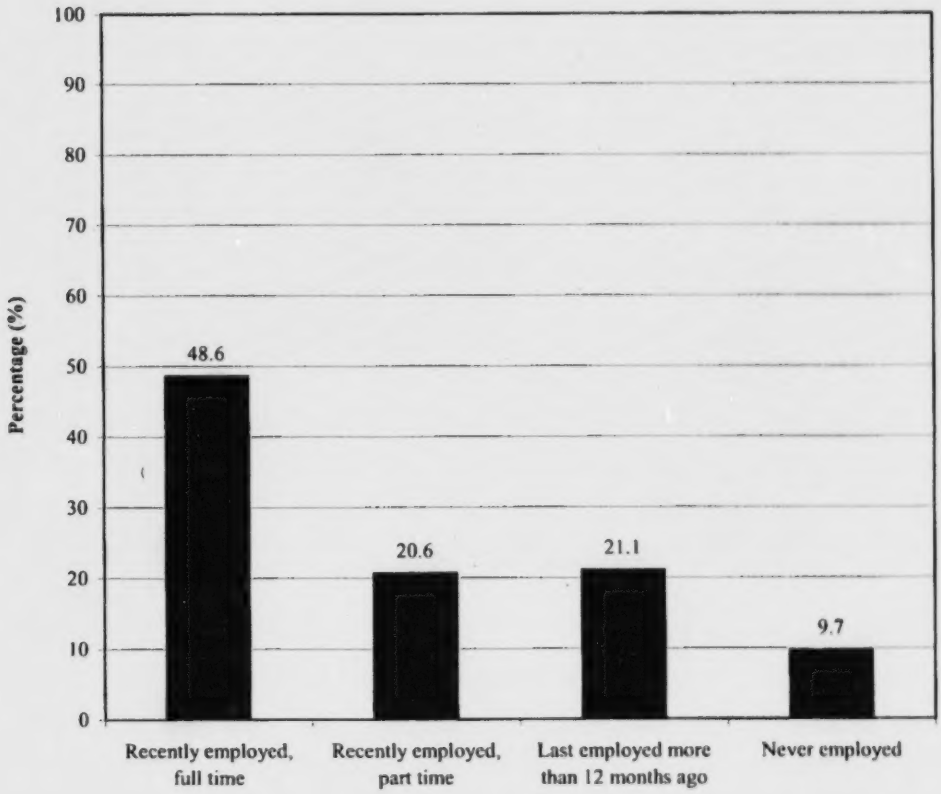
Why Did Some Residents Work Less — and in Worse Jobs — Than Others?

Numerous studies have linked various characteristics of individuals to variation in employment patterns. For example, in a recent MDRC study, researchers found that a sample of extremely disadvantaged women who remained on the welfare rolls of four urban counties had higher prevalence rates of both individual and multiple physical and mental health problems relative to women who had transitioned off welfare and were working.[21] Other researchers constructed a "multiple barrier index" that includes several physical and mental health problems and found that almost two-thirds of a 1997 sample of welfare recipients residing in an urban

[21]Polit, London, and Martinez, 2001.

Figure 5

Employment Status of Jobs-Plus Survey Respondents, Past 12 Months



SOURCE: MDRC calculations from the Jobs-Plus baseline survey.

NOTES: These calculations do not include respondents from the St. Paul, MN, Jobs-Plus site.
Sample size = 1,681.

Michigan county had two or more of the 14 barriers measured.[22] Still other research has demonstrated that some personal characteristics (for example, the presence of a disability or very low basic skills) are strongly correlated with who finds employment.[23]

Knowing this, one would expect to find significant differences across the measure of labor market connection, with a higher proportion of less-connected respondents possessing characteristics that are hypothesized to be related to less employment.

Demographic Characteristics

Table 3 presents the distribution of selected demographic characteristics across the first three employment subgroups.[24] As shown, those employed full time in the prior year were somewhat younger, more likely to be Hispanic, and more likely to be married or cohabiting than the other two subgroups. In contrast, those recently employed part time were less likely to be Hispanic and less likely to be married or cohabiting (but more likely to be single, never married). Though these differences are statistically significant, it should be noted that they are quite small.

The survey also asked about children living in the household. Across the three employment subgroups, most respondents reported that there was a child under age 18 in the household — ranging from 75 percent of those without recent employment to 79 percent of those employed full time in the past year. Though those recently employed full time were less likely to have no children, there were no other statistically significant differences across the subgroups in terms of the number of children in the household. In fact, across the ranges of children (one child, two children, or three or more children), the proportions were evenly distributed, with about 25 percent of respondents in each subgroup falling into each category.

Differences in educational attainment mirror what has been commonly shown in previous studies: The less connected to the labor market respondents were, the more likely they were to have less than a high school diploma. Moreover, those with recent full-time employment were more likely to have a high school diploma or GED certificate (54 percent) than those recently employed part time (47 percent) or those with no recent employment (44 percent) —

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[22]Specifically, the 14 barriers fell into the following six domains: education, work experience, job skills, and workplace norms; perceived discrimination; transportation; psychiatric disorders and substance dependence within past year; physical health problems; and domestic violence (Danziger et al., 2000).

[23]Olson and Pavetti, 1996; Pavetti, 1997.

[24]For all the tables that present information by labor market connection, the data should be read as "percentage of the subgroup who have a particular attribute." For example, as seen in Table 3, 73.5 percent of those who were employed full time within the past year are black, not Hispanic. Also note that statistical significance levels (indicated by one to three stars in the right-most column) represent differences across the *four* employment subgroups. All tables in this analysis that present subgroup differences will note when statistical significance levels are different across the *three* subgroups discussed.

Table 3

Characteristics of Jobs-Plus Survey Respondents, by Employment History

Characteristic	Employed Within Past Year, Full Time	Employed Within Past Year, Part Time	Last Employed More Than One Year Ago	Never Employed
Age	34	35	37	33 ***
Race/ethnicity (%)				
Black, not Hispanic	73.5	74.3	73.0	69.8
Hispanic	18.3	14.2	15.6	11.8 ***
White[a]	2.1	4.1	3.7	0.6 ***
Asian/Pacific Islander[a]	5.4	7.3	6.5	17.8 ***
Other	0.8	0.0	1.3	0.0
Marital status (%)				
Single, never married	58.2	62.8	53.6	67.0 ***
Married/cohabiting	18.3	11.0	14.1	11.8 ***
Married/living apart	6.1	6.4	5.9	3.0
Divorced	13.8	15.5	16.8	11.8
Widowed	3.7	4.3	9.7	6.3 ***
Any children (%)	79.2	72.3	74.5	74.6
No children[b]	20.8	27.7	25.5	25.4
One child	28.1	26.2	24.2	17.5
Two children	27.2	23.9	25.3	19.4
Three or more children[a]	23.9	22.1	25.0	37.8 ***
Education (%)				
No high school diploma or GED	40.7	46.1	53.0	69.9 ***
High school diploma or GED	53.5	47.0	43.5	28.9 ***
More than high school diploma or GED[a]	5.8	6.8	3.5	1.3 ***
Receipt of public benefits in past 12 months (%)				
Anyone in household receiving welfare	40.0	62.2	68.9	67.5 ***
Anyone in household receiving food stamps	55.9	78.6	78.5	76.6 ***
Ever convicted of a crime	8.8	7.3	9.4	5.0
Sample size	731	332	338	127

(continued)

Table 3 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Jobs-Plus baseline survey.

NOTES: The stars indicate statistically significant differences across the employment groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * = 10 percent; ** = 5 percent; *** = 1 percent.

These calculations do not include respondents from the St. Paul, MN, Jobs-Plus site.

[a]Though statistically significant across the four connection groups, the differences across the three connection groups for the following variables are not statistically significant: White, Asian/Pacific Islander, three or more children, and more than high school diploma or GED.

[b]Though not statistically significant across the four connection groups, the differences across the three connection groups for the following variable are statistically significant: no children (*).

suggesting that having a high school education contributed to a somewhat higher probability of being employed full time. Only a small percentage of respondents achieved more than a high school education.

Other Characteristics

Did receipt of public benefits distinguish the respondents who were least connected to the labor market from those who were more connected? Not surprisingly, those who were most strongly connected to the labor market were least reliant on welfare and food stamps. The majority (69 percent) of respondents who were not employed within 12 months of the survey reported that someone in the household had received welfare in the prior 12 months. In comparison, 62 percent of those who recently worked part time and 40 percent of those who recently worked full time stated that someone in the household had received welfare in the prior 12 months. Household food stamp receipt had a similar pattern.

Finally, although having a criminal history is often thought to be associated with difficulty in finding jobs, there are no statistically significant differences across the employment subgroups in the proportion ever convicted of a crime.

Aside from educational attainment, the demographic characteristics assessed in this analysis were not clearly and consistently related to employment for this sample of public housing residents. This finding is contrary to expectations, and it suggests that program administrators will not be able to target services very well to particular residents based on a specific demographic profile; no distinguishing profile for any employment subgroup was found on the basis of common demographic data or baseline characteristics.

As mentioned above, one purpose of assessing the relationship between labor market connection and demographic characteristics is to establish whether certain characteristics would readily identify an individual as being "hard-to-employ." Though consistent differences in demographic characteristics did not emerge in this analysis, it may be possible to distinguish such individuals using other personal characteristics that were measured in the Jobs-Plus survey. The following sections focus on four domains that may impede or facilitate endeavors to find employment: health, experiences with violence and concerns about safety, labor market perceptions, and social networks and social supports for work.

Health Characteristics

Given well-documented findings highlighting the relationship between health-related characteristics and employment,[25] a strong relationship would be expected between measures of

[25]See, for example, Danziger et al. (1999) and Polit, London, and Martinez (2001).

physical and mental health, on the one hand, and employment status, on the other — with negative health outcomes being proportionally higher in the lesser connected subgroups.

The upper panel of Table 4 presents health-related items that were addressed in the Jobs-Plus survey. Consistently — as seen in prior research — those with the least connection to the labor market fared the worst across all measures of physical and mental health status relative to the other two employment subgroups. Respondents who were most connected fared the best. For example, about 47 percent of those without recent employment self-rated their health as fair or poor — nearly twice the proportion of those recently employed full time, at 26 percent.[26] This same pattern is reflected in other measures of physical and mental health status, such as substance use and depression. Residents who were recently employed full time reported lower levels of substance use and depressive symptoms relative to those employed part time, and residents who were not recently employed reported the highest levels of both measures.

Factor analysis was conducted to determine whether individual items could be grouped into scales. For example, it may be possible to group the four depression items into a single measure representing the number of depressive symptoms. The factor analysis resulted in two health domains: physical health (in fair or poor health and health condition limits work or type of work) and depressive symptoms (feeling the following in the past week: sad, blue, lonely, depressed). Scale scores were then computed so that comparisons could be made across the employment subgroups.[27]

As is seen in Table 4, respondents who were not employed within the prior year had a mean health scale score of 0.9 (meaning that, on average, residents in this subgroup had at least one of the two health barriers included in the scale), compared with 0.4 for those employed full time and 0.6 for those recently employed part time. The scale scores for mental health items show a similar pattern.

Though a causal relationship cannot be established in this analysis, health is clearly a distinguishing feature between those who worked more and those who worked less — with those who worked more being healthier. These results suggest the importance of identifying and

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[26]Note that previous studies have demonstrated a high correlation between self-reported health status and actual health status, reinforcing the utility of self-reports as a measure of general health. For example, see Ross and Mirowsky (1995) and Mossey and Shapiro (1982).

[27]Questions that had multiple responses were collapsed into 0/1 (yes/no) variables. For example, if a response included a Lichert-type scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Agree to 5 = Strongly Disagree, responses of 1 and 2 would be considered a "yes," and responses of 3 to 5 would be considered a "no." To create the scale scores, a value of 1 was assigned to each recoded "yes," and a value of 0 was assigned to each recoded "no." The total score was then computed by summing the values for the items within a scale, making these scale scores a measure of the number of items within the scale that a respondent affirmed. Some questions were reverse-coded to ensure that all items within a scale were coded in the same direction.

Table 4

Health-Related Characteristics and Violence/Safety Issues of Jobs-Plus Survey Respondents, by Employment History

Characteristic	Employed Within Past Year, Full Time	Employed Within Past Year, Part Time	Last Employed More Than One Year Ago	Never Employed
Health-related characteristics (%)				
In fair or poor health	26.1	32.0	47.2	45.4 ***
Health condition limits work or type of work	17.3	30.0	44.4	31.3 ***
If respondent reported alcohol/drug use past year:				
having problems or people complained about use	4.6	5.6	10.7	4.8 **
Scale score[a] (range = 0 to 2)	0.4	0.6	0.9	0.8 ***
For most of the past week, respondent felt:[a]				
Sad	20.9	23.5	35.7	31.9 ***
Could not shake off the blues, even with help	16.9	21.8	27.1	26.5 ***
Lonely	21.1	26.9	30.4	30.1 ***
Depressed	23.1	29.0	39.7	37.1 ***
Scale score[b] (range = 0 to 4)	0.8	1.0	1.3	1.2 ***
Violence/safety issues (%)				
Reported abuse/violence by someone close, past 12 months (any):	15.5	17.2	14.2	16.5
Was threatened with physical harm	8.7	8.1	6.1	13.4
Was hit, slapped, kicked, or physically harmed	6.6	5.6	3.8	3.6
Was abused physically, emotionally, or sexually	10.7	9.4	9.1	9.6
Reported feeling somewhat or very unsafe:				
Being outdoors alone, near unit during day	12.4	16.3	11.8	15.8
Near unit after dark	46.6	49.1	49.6	43.2
Going to surrounding neighborhood alone during day	16.4	18.1	20.4	21.9
At night[d]	56.8	57.7	63.4	55.8
Using public transportation during day	10.5	12.2	11.8	10.1
At night	52.1	48.2	52.5	46.5
Scale score[c] (range = 0 to 6)	2.0	2.0	2.1	2.0
Sample size	731	332	338	127

(continued)

Table 4 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Jobs-Plus baseline survey.

NOTES: The stars indicate statistically significant differences across the employment groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * = 10 percent; ** = 5 percent; *** = 1 percent.

These calculations do not include respondents from the St. Paul, MN, Jobs-Plus site.

Scale scores represent the sum of items affirmed by respondents. Scales were determined through factor analysis.

[a]This scale did not include the item related to alcohol/drug use. Cronbach's alpha for this scale is .63.

[b]Cronbach's alpha for this scale is .84.

[c]Cronbach's alpha for this scale is .78.

[d]Though not statistically significant across the four connection groups, the differences across the three connection groups for the following variable are statistically significant: going to surrounding neighborhoods alone at night (*).

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resolving potential health-related barriers to employment if employment (and ultimately full-time employment) is to be achieved.

Domestic Abuse and Perceived Safety

The Jobs-Plus survey asked questions about the respondents' experiences with domestic abuse and the perceived safety of their housing development and neighborhood. Theoretically, negative experiences related to these factors could act as impediments to employment. For example, if residents perceive the surrounding community to be dangerous, they might be fearful of obtaining and keeping a job that requires them to leave the confines of their development. Another possibility is that some residents might find themselves in an abusive relationship that makes them unable to obtain or maintain employment. If these hypotheses were supported, it would be expected that experiences with domestic abuse and perceptions of safety risks would be more prevalent for residents who were less employed.

The lower panel of Table 4 presents items related to violence and safety issues. Respondents were asked to report whether, within the past 12 months, someone close to them had threatened to harm them physically; had hit, slapped, or kicked them; or had abused them physically, emotionally, or sexually. No statistically significant differences were found across the employment subgroups for these measures of abuse.

Next, respondents were asked whether they felt safe during the day and at night in various situations. Specifically, did residents feel unsafe being outdoors alone near their housing unit, going to the surrounding neighborhood, and using public transportation? Concerns about safety might make residents less willing to seek employment that is near the development, or that requires traveling on public transportation, or that involves night-shift work.

Only one statistically significant relationship emerged: concern about going to the surrounding neighborhood at night. Respondents without recent employment were somewhat more likely to state that this was a concern (63 percent) than respondents in the other two subgroups (about 57 percent each). Since residents without recent employment were proportionally more likely to express this concern, this finding suggests that their employment opportunities might be limited if they are less willing to accept night-shift positions in the surrounding neighborhoods.

Though the hypothesis that experiences with domestic abuse and perceptions about safety would be related to connection to the labor market was not strongly supported in this analysis, these issues nonetheless mattered to respondents. Domestic abuse, in particular, emerged as an important issue. About 16 percent of all respondents stated that they were the victim of some type of domestic abuse in the prior 12 months.

Perceived Reasons for Difficulty in Finding Employment

Jobs-Plus researchers also hypothesized that public housing residents' perceptions of their own employment barriers would be related to how much and how recently they worked and to the types of jobs they found. The survey items that relate to perceptions of the labor market are presented in Table 5. The upper panel presents respondents' views of how their own characteristics and circumstances might affect their opportunity to work. Respondents were asked how important they thought each item was for them personally. Specifically, they were asked how true it was that they had difficulty in finding work for the following reasons: lack of qualifications; not knowing how to find a job; problems reading, writing or speaking English; problems in their personal life; racial/ethnic discrimination; and being a public housing resident.

All respondents were asked about these items, regardless of their employment status. Analysis indicates that the proportion stating that something was a reason for difficulty in finding a job increased as connection to the labor market decreased. Thus, respondents without recent employment were most likely to affirm these reasons. For example, whereas 68 percent of those recently employed full time agreed that lack of qualifications was a reason for difficulty in finding a job, 74 percent of those recently employed part time and 79 percent of those not recently employed affirmed that lack of qualifications made their job search difficult. The pattern of differences across the employment subgroups for respondents who thought that problems in their personal life were a reason for difficulty finding and holding a job is similar to the pattern just described, though the difference between the two extremes is larger: 31 percent for respondents working full time versus 57 percent for those without recent employment.

Respondents were also asked whether racial/ethnic discrimination or the fact that they were public housing residents made it more difficult to find a job. The only significant difference emerged for residents who thought that the stigma of public housing made it difficult to find a job, with 18 percent of those recently employed full time thinking that this statement was true — compared with 26 percent of those recently employed part time and 25 percent of those not recently employed. No statistically significant subgroup differences emerged regarding racial/ethnic discrimination, though this was clearly a concern for many respondents: More than half of each employment subgroup thought that discrimination was a reason for difficulty in finding a job. In fact, nearly all these statements had relevance to many respondents, regardless of how connected they were to the labor market.

The scale score — which represents the number of items affirmed by respondents — highlights this. Though the scale score of 2.2 for those recently employed full time is significantly lower than the scale score for the other two employment subgroups (2.6 for those employed part time and 2.9 for those not recently employed), it still indicates that, on average, respondents who were recently employed full time thought that two of the statements related to

Table 5

Jobs-Plus Survey Respondents' Perceptions of the Labor Market, by Employment History

Characteristic	Employed Within Past Year, Full Time	Employed Within Past Year, Part Time	Last Employed More Than One Year Ago	Never Employed
Reasons for difficulty in finding a job (%)				
Lack of qualifications	67.6	73.9	78.8	82.5 ***
Not knowing how to find a job	29.3	39.0	40.9	69.1 ***
Problems reading, writing, or speaking English	23.1	29.4	33.2	50.4 ***
Problems in personal life	31.2	42.0	57.0	62.4 ***
Racial/ethnic discrimination	50.1	54.3	54.4	55.8
Being a public housing resident	18.3	25.5	25.1	30.0 ***
Scale score[a] (range = 0 to 6 reasons)	2.2	2.6	2.9	3.5 ***
Concerns associated with working full time (%)				
Making sure children OK while at work	18.6	31.4	34.2	36.5 ***
Traveling to and from work	9.6	20.6	24.7	36.3 ***
Worrying about safety traveling after dark	30.0	45.4	50.4	48.8 ***
Arranging for repairs at unit (home)	20.9	20.5	19.2	25.6
Losing benefits because making too much money	27.9	28.2	28.5	32.5
Rent would be raised because making too much money	48.5	45.2	44.4	41.2
Having friends and relatives asking for money	22.9	23.5	25.3	23.8
Scale score[b] (range = 0 to 7 reasons)	1.6	1.9	2.0	2.1 ***
Sample size	731	332	338	127

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Jobs-Plus baseline survey.

NOTES: The stars indicate statistically significant differences across the employment groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * = 10 percent; ** = 5 percent; *** = 1 percent.

These calculations do not include respondents from the St. Paul, MN, Jobs-Plus site.

Scale scores represent the sum of items affirmed by respondents. Scales were determined through factor analysis.

[a]Cronbach's alpha for this scale is .64.

[b]Cronbach's alpha for this scale is .61.

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difficulty in finding a job were true. This is especially important, given that this subgroup presumably had an easier time finding employment than the other two subgroups.

What are the implications of these results in terms of increasing public housing residents' connection to the labor market? Although many of these residents were able to find jobs despite these factors, many others were not employed. If these factors could be addressed, residents' connection to the labor market might be improved. Consequently, program designers might want to pay attention to the types of problems that these residents experienced.

Concerns About Working Full Time

The lower panel of Table 5 presents items related to concerns associated with working full time. Respondents were told that some people might have concerns about working full time while others do not, and they were asked to rate "how big a problem" each item would create for them personally if they were to work full time. All respondents were asked these questions, regardless of their employment status.

Statistically significant differences emerged across the employment subgroups in terms of concerns about children, travel, and safety. The most striking finding is that respondents who were recently employed full time were least likely to think of these items as a problem. For example, about half as many of the residents who were recently employed full time (10 percent) thought that traveling to and from work would be a problem as those who were recently employed part time (21 percent) and those not recently employed (25 percent). This is not surprising, given that these residents *were* working full time; either these concerns were never a problem for them or, if they were a problem, these residents worked full time despite their concerns. The significantly higher percentages in the two subgroups that were less connected to the labor market suggest that program designers who want to help individuals find full-time employment need to address these concerns.

Respondents were also asked whether the following things would be problematic if they were to work full time: arranging for repairs, when needed, at their housing unit; losing any benefits that they may have been receiving or having their rent raised due to making too much money; or having friends or relatives ask for money. No statistically significant differences emerged across the three employment subgroups. However, it should be noted that a substantial number of respondents — regardless of employment subgroup — agreed that lost benefits and raised rent would be a problem if they were to work full time. Programs like Jobs-Plus are attempting to address these concerns through the use of rent incentives that will "make work pay." By establishing flat rents, reducing the percentage of income that has to be paid in rent,

and offering other financial incentives to work, the program is hoping to encourage more residents to get and keep jobs, even when these are low-paying.[28]

Social Supports for Work

A number of scholars have suggested that deficient social capital may impede the job search efforts of those living in high-poverty neighborhoods.[29] For example, certain types of social networks may provide informal information-sharing related to job openings as well as encouragement while conducting job search activities, whereas isolation from such social networks may preclude these important avenues to employment. This section examines whether survey items that measured aspects of the social capital of the resident population in the Jobs-Plus housing developments were related to residents' degree of connection to the labor market.

The upper two panels of Table 6 relate to respondents' social networks and to their ties to the labor market. The first three items focus on close acquaintances living *within* the development and describe their connection to the labor market (currently employed in a full-time job, ever employed in a full-time job) and whether these people were good sources of information about available jobs. As the table shows, there were two statistically significant differences — those without recent employment were less likely to report having close acquaintances with full-time, steady work, both currently and in the past year. However, these differences were relatively small, particularly for those who reported having close acquaintances in the development who were currently employed. The next three items describe the same factors for relatives and friends living *outside* the development, and these measures do show statistically significant differences across the subgroups. As is seen, residents with recent full-time employment were more likely than those who had not worked within the past 12 months to report having relatives or friends outside the development who were currently employed full time (60 percent versus 52 percent), who had worked full time in the past year (61 percent versus 49 percent), and who were good sources of information on employment opportunities (51 percent versus 39 percent).

Another way to examine residents' social networks is to quantify how many relatives and friends they have within the development. To measure this, respondents were asked how many adult relatives or friends lived in the development (but not with them). Slightly more respondents without recent employment reported having no adult relatives or friends in the development (51 percent) than did respondents with recent full-time employment (48 percent) or those with recent part-time jobs (42 percent). These relatively high levels across the three subgroups suggest that many respondents did not have close ties to their residential community.

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[28]For a complete discussion of rent incentives, see Miller and Riccio (2002).

[29]Riccio, 1999.

Table 6

Social Supports and Social Networks of Jobs-Plus Survey Respondents, by Employment History

Characteristic	Employed Within Past Year, Full Time	Employed Within Past Year, Part Time	Last Employed More Than One Year Ago	Never Employed
All or most adults whom respondent knows well in the development[a] (%):				
Currently have full-time, steady paid work[d]	14.0	17.4	13.8	10.8 *
Have had full-time, steady work in past year	18.9	19.0	11.7	13.4 ***
Would be a good source of information about finding a job	17.5	19.1	17.4	20.0
All or most adults whom respondent knows well outside the development[b] (%):				
Currently have full-time, steady paid work	60.2	52.1	52.2	38.6 ***
Have had full-time, steady work in past year	61.1	57.2	49.3	39.9 ***
Would be a good source of information about finding a job	50.7	41.8	39.3	36.4 ***
No adult relative or friends live in development[d]	47.6	41.6	50.5	49.9
Respondents reporting that any adult whom they are close to (%):				
Provided encouragement to work, look for work, or attend job-related programs or classes	66.9	73.8	60.1	57.2 ***
Helped in finding out about job openings or available work	66.2	74.4	55.4	47.0 ***
Helped in ways that would make it easier to work or look for work	61.8	60.3	41.0	33.2 ***
Made respondent feel as though she should not work	8.6	6.7	10.7	11.9
Failed to help with things like child care, transportation, chores, etc.[d]	23.5	30.8	24.3	23.8
Did things that made it difficult to attend/complete programs or classes that would help get a job	16.5	20.3	14.8	17.6
Prevented respondent from finding a job or going to work[d]	6.3	11.1	8.6	10.2
Caused respondent to lose or quit a job	6.4	8.2	3.4	5.3 *
Scale score[c] (range = 0 to 8)	6.3	6.3	5.9	5.7 ***
Sample size	731	332	338	127

(continued)

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Table 6 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Jobs-Plus baseline survey.

NOTES: The stars indicate statistically significant differences across the employment groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * = 10 percent; ** = 5 percent; *** = 1 percent.

These calculations do not include respondents from the St. Paul, MN, Jobs-Plus site.

Scale scores represent the sum of items affirmed by respondents. Scales were determined through factor analysis.

[a]The exact wording of the question was: "This question concerns adults outside of your own household. Of the other adults in [development] that you know well, would you say all, most, some, hardly any, or none...?"

[b]The exact wording of the question was: "Now thinking about your adult relatives and good friends outside of [development], would you say all, most, some, hardly any, or none...?"

[c]Items representing discouragement of work efforts were reversed for inclusion in the scale score. Therefore, this scale score represents the average number of encouraging (positive) items affirmed by respondents. Cronbach's alpha for this scale is .46.

[d]Though not statistically significant across the four connection groups, the differences across the three connection groups for the following variables are statistically significant: all or most adults outside development currently have full-time, steady paid work (**); no adult relative or friends live in development (*); failed to help with things like child care, transportation, chores, etc. (*); prevented respondent from finding a job or going to work (*).

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The bottom panel of Table 6 presents items related to peer supports for — or deterrents from — work. Having supportive peers who provide encouragement for work may facilitate finding employment and being able to keep the job over time. For example, supportive peers may be more willing to pitch in with child care or transportation help or to provide leads about employment opportunities.

The first three items in the table's bottom panel address supports or encouragement for work (provided encouragement to work, look for work, or attend job-related programs; helped in finding out about job openings; and helped in ways that made it easier to work or look for work). For all three items, proportionally fewer of the subgroup least connected to the labor market stated that they received such supports. For example, 60 percent of respondents whose last job was more than a year before the survey reported that an adult who was close to them encouraged their efforts to get work or training — compared with 67 percent of respondents with recent full-time work and 74 percent of those with recent part-time experience. Although fewer of the respondents who were not recently employed reported having social supports for work, it should be noted that the levels are relatively high: 55 percent reported being helped in finding out about job openings, and 41 percent reported being helped in ways that made it easier to work or look for work. This suggests that even with peer supports in place, other factors were affecting connection to the labor market.

A somewhat surprising pattern emerged in questions related to peers' being *unsupportive* of work efforts. Relative to respondents not recently employed, a higher percentage of those recently employed part time were more likely to say "yes" to three of the items: having an adult close to them who (1) failed to help with things like child care, transportation, and chores; (2) prevented the respondent from finding a job or going to work; and (3) caused the respondent to lose or quit a job. Given the nature of these items, it would be logical to expect a higher percentage of respondents who were not recently employed to report being discouraged from work. Though speculative (since causal inferences cannot be made), this relationship for residents with recent part-time employment might suggest that those with a moderate connection to the labor market (that is, employed part time rather than full time) were especially sensitive to peers' discouragement. It might also suggest that part-time employment created more situations in which conflicts could arise over these particular issues.

Residents Who Never Worked

As explained earlier, respondents in a fourth employment subgroup — residents who had never worked in their lifetime — were included in the analysis (and all accompanying tables) but were not discussed in detail. Notable findings related to this subgroup are reported below.

In terms of the demographic characteristics shown in Table 3, the never-employed respondents appear to be different from the other three subgroups. They are much more likely to

be Asian/Pacific Islander (18 percent), suggesting that perhaps immigration status is a factor affecting their labor market connection. At the time of the survey, they were more likely to be single, never married (67 percent), and were much more likely to report having three or more children in the household (nearly 38 percent). They were also much more likely not to have a high school diploma or GED (70 percent). Taken together, these results suggest that this subgroup of residents may be the most challenged in terms of being able to find or keep jobs.

No striking patterns are evident in matters related to health and safety (Table 4). In many ways, this subgroup of never-employed residents resembles the least connected subgroup — residents who had some work history but did not work within the 12 months before the survey.

Across most measures of respondents' perceptions of their employment barriers, residents who never worked stood out as being quite different from the other three subgroups. In statements related to perceived reasons why someone may have difficulty finding a job, respondents who were never employed were consistently more likely to affirm the reasons mentioned. For example, 69 percent of those who were never employed stated that not knowing how to find a job was a reason why they had difficulty becoming employed (Table 5). This is considerably higher than the percentages for those last employed more than one year earlier and those who worked part time in the past year (about 40 percent of each subgroup).

Another striking finding relates to concerns associated with working full time (Table 5). Respondents who had never worked were most likely to say that making sure their children were okay was an area of concern. Traveling to and from work was also an issue; never-employed respondents were nearly four times more likely to mention transportation as an area of concern than the most connected group — those who had worked full time within the past year (36 percent versus 10 percent).

For measures of social supports for work (Table 6), notable differences emerged among never-employed respondents, particularly relative to residents with recent full-time employment. Respondents who had never worked were less likely to report that all or most of their relatives and friends who lived outside the development were working full time (40 percent, compared with 61 percent of those recently employed full time) and that these people were good sources for job leads (36 percent versus 51 percent).

Summary

This section has evaluated the characteristics of Jobs-Plus survey respondents that may have been related to their degree of connection to the labor market. Particularly noteworthy is that, though interesting findings relating to residents' social networks and their ties to the labor market emerged, only health-related characteristics were clearly and consistently related to labor market connection. Health variables aside, many of the factors that were hypothesized to be

related to labor market connection were not, making it unlikely that a statistical profile of the hard-to-employ could be constructed from data of the kind used in this analysis — despite the unusual richness of the data.

Understanding Job Search Efforts Among Public Housing Residents

Introduction

Public housing residents who lack jobs may be considered more connected to the labor market if they are actively seeking work than if they are not seeking work. Those who are not working and not looking for work are of particular concern, because they may present a significantly greater challenge to programs that attempt to raise the employment levels of public housing residents.

This section of the report examines the extent to which nonworking survey respondents were taking concrete steps to find employment or were truly "out of the labor market." For those falling into the latter group, the discussion also explores *why* they were not looking for work and whether they are distinctive in terms of background characteristics or personal circumstances. The analysis then considers the work search efforts of respondents who were already employed at the time of the survey. Many of them may have been attempting to find jobs that offered more hours or better pay and benefits.

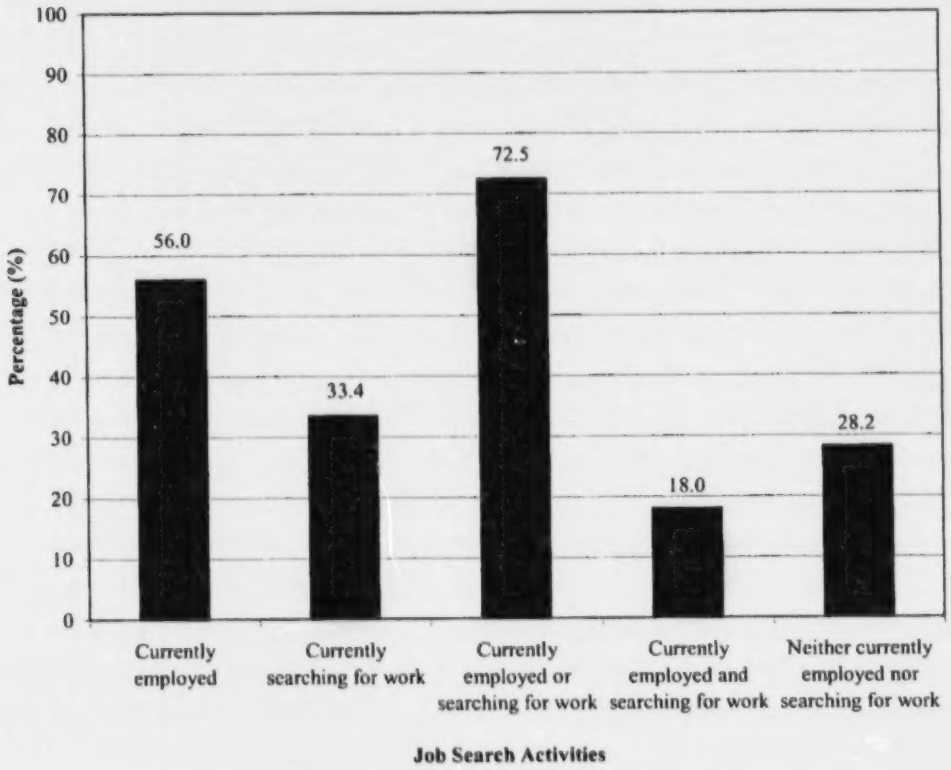
How Much Were Residents Actively Searching for Work?

As Figure 6 shows, nearly 33 percent of respondents engaged in job search efforts within four weeks of the Jobs-Plus survey. When employment and work search efforts are viewed together, it can be seen that most of these residents were somehow recently connected to the labor market; nearly 73 percent were either currently employed or searching for work within the past four weeks. Moreover, 18 percent of respondents who were currently employed were also actively searching for work, suggesting that these residents might have been seeking advancement opportunities — an important outcome, since their efforts could lead to better jobs.[30] Those who were most disconnected — neither currently working nor currently searching for work — make up about 28 percent of the sample. Though this percentage is high, it is likely not as high as some might expect, given the stereotype that public housing residents are uninterested in working.

[30]Additional analysis (not shown) revealed that 22 percent of respondents currently employed full time and 34 percent of those currently employed part time searched for work in the prior four weeks.

Figure 6

Employment Status and Job Search Efforts of Jobs-Plus Survey Respondents



SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Jobs-Plus baseline survey.

NOTES: These calculations include respondents from the St. Paul, MN, Jobs-Plus site.
Sample sizes range from 1,681 to 1,689.
Current employment is defined as being employed at the time of the survey. Current job search is defined as searching for work within four weeks of the survey.

Table 7 compares the job search efforts of the employment subgroups and shows that those who were recently employed part time were most likely to report having searched for work in the past four weeks (39 percent versus 33 percent or less). It is also noteworthy that less than one-third of those without recent employment searched for work in the prior four weeks and that only about 45 percent searched for work in the past year. The majority of residents who had recent full-time or part-time work experience reported having looked for work in the past year (over 90 percent of each group).[31]

To better understand which types of jobs respondents would be willing to take, they were asked to specify the minimum acceptable wage for a job that provided benefits; this is known as their *reservation wage*. As is seen in Table 7, respondents without recent employment had an average reservation wage that was nearly $6.00 an hour greater than the actual average wage rate for all those who recently worked ($12.26 per hour versus $6.70 per hour). In contrast, for respondents with recent full-time work, this difference was only $1.32 per hour, suggesting that those who had a greater connection to the labor market also had more realistic employment aspirations — presumably, because they had recent experience with prevailing wage rates.

When the proportions of respondents who were currently employed or currently searching for work are viewed together, 76 percent wanted to work and were making some effort to do so (not shown). This may challenge the perception that public housing residents are not interested in work. At the same time, however, a significant proportion of respondents (24 percent) were neither working nor looking for work. The last section of the report explores reasons why this group of residents may be so disconnected from the labor market.

Why Did Some Residents Engage in Job Search to a Different Degree Than Other Residents?

By searching for patterns across some of the characteristics discussed in relation to differences in employment (for example, demographic and health-related characteristics), it may be possible to understand public housing residents' different degrees of job search efforts. Moreover, since all survey respondents were asked about their job search efforts during the prior four weeks, it is possible to look at those efforts in terms of current employment status. This is important, because the circumstances that relate to job search efforts of currently employed residents might differ substantially from the circumstances of currently unemployed residents.

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[31] Respondents who were currently employed at the time of the survey were not asked about job search in the prior 12 months. Therefore, this percentage should be interpreted as 90 percent of those who were not currently employed but who did work during the prior 12 months.

Table 7

Reservation Wage and Job Search Efforts of Jobs-Plus Survey Respondents, by Employment History

Characteristic	Employed Within Past Year, Full Time	Employed Within Past Year, Part Time	Last Employed More Than One Year Ago	Never Employed
Reservation wage[a] ($)	8.02	9.49	12.26	10.68 ***
Job search activity (%)				
Searched for work, past four weeks	32.9	39.2	31.0	29.0 **
Interviewed/spoke with employers, past four weeks[b]	20.9	21.5	15.6	12.0 **
Searched for work, past 12 months[c]	90.9	93.7	45.2	46.3 ***
Sample size	731	332	338	127

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Jobs-Plus baseline survey.

NOTES: The stars indicate statistically significant differences across the employment groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * = 10 percent; ** = 5 percent; *** = 1 percent.

These calculations do not include respondents from the St. Paul, MN, Jobs-Plus site.

[a]Respondents were asked the minimum wage rate they would accept if offered a full-time job that included medical benefits.

[b]This question was asked of respondents who reported searching for work in the past four weeks.

[c]This question was not asked of respondents who were employed at the time of the survey.

[d]Though statistically significant across the four connection groups, the differences across the three connection groups for the following variable are not statistically significant: interviewed/spoken with employers, past four weeks.

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Jobs-Plus Residents Who Were Not Employed and Their Job Search Efforts

Table 8 presents the characteristics that are hypothesized to be related to engagement in job search efforts for two groups of currently jobless respondents: those who searched for work in the prior four weeks (those who can be described as unemployed) and those who did not (the nonemployed). Significantly more unemployed residents who searched for work had a household member who received welfare, relative to those who did not search for work (78 percent versus 63 percent). Age differences were not driving this relationship with welfare receipt — the average age for each group was nearly identical (not shown). There are two important things to note about these results. First, a large proportion of the households in both groups was receiving welfare, highlighting the importance that welfare played for these jobless residents. Second, the 15 percentage point difference between the two groups could be reflecting the push toward work that many welfare agencies adopted during this time, just after the 1996 passage of the landmark legislation that significantly changed the welfare rules (the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, or PRWORA). No statistically significant difference was found for household food stamp receipt.

Marital status was also statistically significantly related to job search status: 64 percent of respondents who searched for work in the four weeks before the survey were single (never married), compared with 54 percent of those who did not search for work — suggesting that residents who did not search for work may have been more likely to have someone who could help them financially.[32] There was also a small but statistically significant relationship between job search and the presence of a child younger than age 18; unemployed residents who engaged in job search were slightly more likely to have children than nonemployed residents who were not searching for work (76 percent versus 73 percent).[33] No statistically significant differences were found across the two job search groups in terms of other background characteristics (race/ethnicity and educational attainment).

Selected characteristics that are associated with perceptions about the labor market were also evaluated to determine whether they might be related to job search efforts. If residents believed that certain aspects of the labor market made employment a challenge or if they had expectations about employment that could not be met, they might have decided not to look for work.

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[32]No statistically significant differences were found between the two groups in the proportion of respondents who were married or cohabiting (not shown).

[33]Unemployed respondents who engaged in job search were also more likely to have one child in the household (33 percent) than those who did not engage in job search (25 percent). No significant differences in job search efforts were found for respondents reporting two children or three or more children (not shown).

Table 8

Selected Characteristics of Currently Not Employed Jobs-Plus Survey Respondents, by Job Search Status in the Prior Four Weeks

Characteristic	Currently Not Employed and Searched for Work	Currently Not Employed and Did Not Search for Work
Anyone in the household receiving welfare, past year	78.4	63.4 ***
Anyone in the household receiving food stamps, past year	80.3	78.7
Respondent is black, not Hispanic	71.2	71.5
Respondent is single, never married	63.7	54.3 *
Respondent has any children under 18 in the household	76.4	72.5 **
Respondent has no high school diploma or GED	57.3	58.9
Reservation wage[a] ($)	10.51	12.67 *
Expressed concern about travel to/from work if employed full time	25.3	30.2 **
Expressed concern about rent going up if employed full time	34.3	45.6 **
Health condition limits work/type of work	26.7	50.3 ***
Felt depressed for most of past week	40.0	39.3
Reported any type of abuse by someone close	16.2	13.5
Sample size	139	324

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Jobs-Plus baseline survey.

NOTES: The stars indicate statistically significant differences across the job search status groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * = 10 percent; ** = 5 percent; *** = 1 percent.

These calculations do not include respondents from the St. Paul, MN, Jobs-Plus site.

[a]Respondents were asked the minimum wage rate they would accept if offered a full-time job that included medical benefits.

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Once again, there was a substantial difference in reservation wage. Respondents who did not search for work stated that the lowest acceptable wage was more than $2.00 per hour greater than the wage acceptable to respondents who had searched for work ($12.67 per hour versus $10.51).

Respondents who did not search for work were also more likely to express concern about traveling to and from work (30 percent versus 25 percent) and about having their rent raised if they worked full time (46 percent versus 34 percent).

As with employment status, there is a striking relationship between health and job search. About 50 percent of unemployed respondents who did not search for work stated that a health condition limited the amount or type of work they could engage in, compared with only 27 percent of those who did search for work. While this statistically significant difference is large, it is also important to acknowledge that nearly one-quarter of those searching for work were doing so despite having reported health as a problem. Of course, the severity of disability (which was not measured in the Jobs-Plus survey) may have been a factor; perhaps residents who had more severe health problems were unable to engage in job search. While feeling depressed was found to be significantly related to employment status, no statistically significant differences emerged across the two job search categories.

What do these findings suggest for programs that are trying to encourage nonemployed individuals to actively search for work? First, respondents' health was an important factor in this study, suggesting that until health issues can be addressed, nonemployed public housing residents may have difficulty engaging in job search. Second, an individual's significant relationships may play a role in job search efforts. Single, never-married respondents were more likely to engage in job search, perhaps because they did not have another source of support. Finally, perceptions of the labor market should not be discounted. In this analysis, respondents who did not search for work expressed concerns about how employment would affect their rent, and — given their skill levels — they had unrealistic expectations about wages. Programs that address these factors may find it easier to engage unemployed public housing residents in job search efforts.

Jobs-Plus Residents Who Were Employed and Their Job Search Efforts

Another important element in understanding different degrees of job search is the role that it may play in advancement in the labor force. For individuals who are currently employed, engaging in job search may lead to leaving an unsatisfactory job or, simply, to moving up to a better job. By assessing the relationship between selected characteristics of currently employed respondents and job search status, it may be possible to better understand what motivates employed residents to engage in job search.

As previously mentioned, 18 percent of currently employed respondents had been looking for a new or additional job within the four weeks prior to their survey interview. Table 9 compares selected characteristics of the residents who searched for work in the prior four weeks and those who did not, and it also compares certain characteristics of their jobs. The upper panel shows — as was seen in the previous section — that a greater proportion of respondents who searched for work reported having a household member who received welfare (and, in this analysis, food stamps). Those who searched for work were also slightly more likely to be black, not Hispanic (78 percent versus 73 percent) and less likely to have a high school diploma or GED (33 percent versus 43 percent). No significant differences were found in marital status, the presence of children younger than 18 in the household, or reservation wage.

The middle and bottom panels of Table 9 present characteristics related to respondents' current jobs. Job-seekers were less likely to be working full time (and more likely to be working part time) relative to those not searching for work. Given this, it is not surprising to find that those who were actively searching for work were working significantly fewer hours, were earning less, and were less likely to be receiving employer-provided benefits than currently employed residents who were not searching for work. For example, only 31 percent of those searching for work reported receiving fringe benefits, compared with 54 percent of those not searching for work. These results suggest that respondents who were searching for work had lower-quality jobs — as measured in this analysis — than those who were not searching for work.

Differences in respondents' perceived characteristics of their current job further highlight this. Those searching for work in the past four weeks were more likely to report that they had poor job security (35 percent versus 21 percent) and that the their hours were constantly changing (66 percent versus 47 percent).

These results — coupled with the results on job quality from the earlier section — suggest that program operators should target some of their job search assistance to currently employed individuals, with an emphasis on job advancement. While many of this study's respondents were looking for work on their own, having access to formal services provided by programs like Jobs-Plus might augment job search efforts, making it possible to move up to better jobs.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

This report has focused on better understanding the employment experiences of public housing residents. By utilizing an in-depth survey administered to residents of eight public housing developments in seven cities across the United States that were originally selected for participation in the Jobs-Plus demonstration, a compelling portrait of employment and employment experiences has been discussed. This section summarizes how the findings relate to three

Table 9

Selected Characteristics of Currently Employed Jobs-Plus Survey Respondents and of Their Jobs, by Job Search Status in the Prior Four Weeks

Characteristic	Currently Employed and Searched for Work	Currently Employed and Did Not Search for Work
Anyone in the household receiving welfare	53.5	37.5 ***
Anyone in the household receiving food stamps	69.5	55.8 ***
Respondent is black, not Hispanic	78.3	73.1 *
Respondent is single, never married	62.4	57.2
Respondent has any children under 18 in the household	75.4	74.2
Respondent has no high school diploma or GED	33.2	43.0 ***
Reservation wage[a] ($)	8.42	8.80
Characteristics of most recently held job		
Employed full time	59.7	72.2 ***
Employed part time	40.3	27.8 ***
Average hours worked per week	30.8	33.3 **
Average hourly wage ($)	6.07	6.58 ***
Less than $5.15 (%)	30.2	18.0 ***
$5.15-$7.75 (%)	51.7	56.4 *
More than $7.75 (%)	18.0	25.6 **
Received any employer-provided benefits (%)	30.5	54.1 ***
Respondents perceived (%):		
Health or safety risks	41.4	42.9
Poor job security[c]	35.0	21.3 ***
Constantly changing hours[d]	65.7	47.0 ***
Sample size	272	590

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Jobs-Plus baseline survey.

NOTES: The stars indicate statistically significant differences across the job search status groups. Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * = 10 percent; ** = 5 percent; *** = 1 percent.

These calculations do not include respondents from the St. Paul, MN, Jobs-Plus site.

[a]Respondents were asked the minimum wage rate they would accept if offered a full-time job that included medical benefits.

[b]Respondents who stated that the following was true or very true: "You risked your health or safety doing this work."

[c]Respondents who stated that the following was true or very true: "The job security was good; that is, you could pretty much count on having this work."

[d]Respondents who stated that the following was true or very true: "The number of hours you worked each week was always changing."

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key implications for programs that may attempt to help public housing residents specifically — as well as disadvantaged populations in general — to become more connected to the labor market.

- **Programs that provide employment services to disadvantaged populations should not discount the importance of offering employment retention and advancement services.**

Results of this analysis suggest that many of these public housing residents had some connection to the labor market: There were relatively high levels of recent employment, and many of the residents engaged in job search efforts. However, the types of jobs that the residents obtained were generally unstable and of poor quality — low-paying jobs that did not offer employer-provided benefits. Moreover, many of the residents who were currently employed had engaged in job search within the prior four weeks. Those who did so had lower-paying jobs that did not provide fringe benefits, relative to currently employed residents who did not engage in job search.

Programs like Jobs-Plus may be tempted to focus their efforts on helping nonemployed residents find a job so that the development-level employment rate will increase. However, as demonstrated here, many employed public housing residents need retention and advancement services so that they can attain their primary objective: self-sufficiency.

- **Developing a statistical profile of the hard-to-employ may not be possible, though further analysis is needed.**

This analysis clearly indicates that education and health factors are strongly related to labor market connection, suggesting that programs like Jobs-Plus need to address these factors. However, no clearly distinctive profile emerged to indicate which characteristics make an individual hard-to-employ (such as ethnicity, prior criminal convictions, perceptions of the labor market, and so on). Moreover, the hypothesized relationships between labor market connection and social capital are only slightly supported by the analysis. Although there are some interesting associations between social networks and employment subgroups — in particular, having relatives or friends outside the housing development who have some connection to the labor market — overall there are no striking findings. All together, this suggests that building a statistical profile of the hard-to-employ with this analysis may not be feasible. However, further analysis may be needed, since this analysis could not explore causal relationships and certain issues — particularly those related to social capital — were not examined in depth.

- **Recognizing that clients' characteristics, attributes, and perceptions may play a role in whether disadvantaged populations will engage in job search can be important to the success of an employment initiative.**

Job search efforts are an important aspect of finding employment and advancing in the labor market. Not surprisingly, characteristics of clients that act as barriers to employment may

also act as barriers to job search. This analysis highlights the clear relationship between engagement in job search efforts and an individual's health characteristics. More important, however, is that public housing residents' attitudes and perceptions about the labor market may hamper their job search efforts, particularly if they are not employed. For example, unemployed residents who did not engage in job search were more likely to be concerned about rent changes due to employment or about traveling to and from work. Addressing such concerns might ensure that they do not impede job search efforts.

Appendix

Site Tables

Appendix Table A.1

Characteristics of Jobs-Plus Survey Respondents, by Site

Characteristic	All[a]	Baltimore: Gilmor Homes	Chattanooga: Harriet Tubman Homes	Cleveland: Woodhill Homes Estates	Dayton: DeSoto Bass Courts	Los Angeles: Imperial Courts	Los Angeles: William Mead Homes	St. Paul: Mt. Airy Homes	Seattle: Rainier Vista
Age	35 ***	36	30	32	29	35	41	34	38
Race/ethnicity (%)									
Black, not Hispanic	67.8 ***	99.1	94.5	99.6	98.8	74.0	7.2	30.7	38.8
Hispanic	19.2 ***	0.0	2.7	0.4	0.4	24.5	81.9	5.2	0.0
White	3.1 ***	0.5	2.7	0.0	0.8	1.4	1.3	4.6	10.6
Asian/Pacific Islander	38.5 ***	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	9.3	58.8	47.5
Other	1.2 ***	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	0.7	3.1
Marital status (%)									
Single, never married	55.1 ***	68.5	73.1	73.8	78.1	62.6	25.8	26.1	32.9
Married/cohabiting	18.5 ***	6.5	5.7	7.0	5.1	12.3	42.1	45.1	24.7
Married/living apart	6.1 ***	5.6	2.8	3.3	5.1	3.9	12.4	7.2	8.2
Divorced	15.4 **	14.4	14.2	13.1	11.0	14.3	13.7	18.3	24.1
Widowed	4.9 ***	5.1	4.2	2.9	0.8	6.9	6.0	3.3	10.1
Education (%)									
No high school diploma or GED	53.1 ***	42.7	45.9	36.9	32.8	51.4	68.4	93.9	52.5
High school diploma or GED	42.7 ***	54.1	50.9	57.1	65.1	43.8	28.3	6.1	36.3
More than high school diploma or GED	4.8 ***	3.2	3.2	6.0	2.1	4.8	3.4	0.0	11.3
Ever convicted of a crime	8.1	9.3	8.5	11.9	10.1	7.4	4.3	6.5	7.0

(continued)

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Appendix Table A.1 (continued)

Characteristic	All[a]	Baltimore: Gilmor Homes	Chattanooga: Harriet Tubman Homes	Cleveland: Woodhill Homes	Dayton: DeSoto Bass Courts	Los Angeles: Imperial Courts	Los Angeles: William Mead Homes	St. Paul: Mt. Airy Homes	Seattle: Rainier Vista
Receipt of public benefits in the past 12 months (%)									
Anyone in household receiving welfare	54.6 ***	47.9	53.5	51.4	59.2	76.4	50.0	0.0	43.9
Anyone in household receiving food stamps	68.8 ***	68.4	85.4	66.5	71.5	77.5	56.5	0.0	55.7
Yearly household income[a] (%)									
$5,000 or less	42.2 ***	56.9	68.0	54.1	48.2	40.5	33.3	8.2	27.9
$5,001-$10,000	29.6 ***	21.3	19.4	24.9	26.3	37.4	31.5	34.9	40.9
$10,001-$15,000	15.3 ***	13.9	6.3	10.3	16.2	10.3	20.1	24.7	20.8
$15,001-$20,000	7.8 ***	5.0	4.4	8.2	3.5	6.7	10.0	17.1	7.8
$20,001-$25,000	2.1 ***	0.5	1.5	1.3	2.6	1.0	1.8	7.5	0.6
More than $25,001	3.0 ***	2.5	0.5	1.3	3.1	4.1	3.2	7.5	1.9
Sample size	1,689	218	220	252	241	208	237	153	160

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Jobs-Plus baseline survey.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * = 10 percent; ** = 5 percent; *** = 1 percent.
These calculations include respondents from the St. Paul, MN, Jobs-Plus site.

[a]The "all" column presents the average of the averages across the eight developments rather than a true average across all respondents. This was a methodological decision intended to weight the contribution of each site to the overall average equally.

Appendix Table A.2

Characteristics of the Most Recent Job Held by Jobs-Plus Survey Respondents, by Site

Characteristic	All[a]	Baltimore: Gilmor Homes	Chattanooga: Harriet Tubman Homes	Cleveland: Woodhill Homes Estates	Dayton: DeSoto Bass Courts	Los Angeles: Imperial Courts	Los Angeles: William Mead Homes	St. Paul: Mt. Airy Homes	Seattle: Rainier Vista
Currently employed (%)	55.6	52.8	59.5	56.0	61.0	49.0	60.3	52.9	53.1
Average number of hours worked per week	22.9 ***	21.4	27.1	24.2	26.9	18.2	21.3	24.7	19.2
Average hourly wage[a] ($)	6.67 ***	6.09	5.34	6.60	6.19	6.51	6.51	8.72	7.42
Less than $5.15 (%)	20.1 ***	26.4	27.6	24.5	19.9	31.0	15.1	4.1	12.4
$5.15 - $7.75 (%)	53.1 ***	57.6	67.1	50.3	65.7	41.4	63.0	32.7	47.2
More than $7.75 (%)	26.8 ***	16.0	5.3	25.2	14.5	27.6	21.9	63.3	40.4
Employer-provided benefits[a] (%)									
Any benefits	48.6 ***	41.9	55.4	37.4	49.7	34.4	43.6	63.4	62.8
Health plan for self	31.0 ***	26.4	31.9	22.2	30.8	25.2	24.5	37.4	50.0
Health plan for children	40.7 ***	37.2	45.7	31.3	40.2	25.0	41.3	54.5	50.5
Paid sick days	32.6 ***	23.1	39.3	25.8	33.5	21.9	23.1	47.5	46.8
Paid vacation days	25.1 ***	22.1	33.1	20.8	29.7	18.8	14.8	36.0	25.5
Respondent perceived[b,c] (%)									
Health or safety risk[d]	37.0	37.8	46.1	42.5	43.8	44.9	48.7	n/a	31.9
Poor job security[e]	23.6	28.6	25.3	26.5	23.8	35.7	25.8	n/a	22.8
Constantly changing hours[f]	47.5	56.1	54.5	56.7	56.8	56.3	51.9	n/a	47.9
Sample size	1,689	218	220	252	241	208	237	153	160

(continued)

Appendix Table A.2 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Jobs-Plus baseline survey.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * = 10 percent; ** = 5 percent; *** = 1 percent.

[a]The "all" column presents the average of the averages across the eight developments rather than a true average across all respondents. This was a methodological decision intended to weight the contribution of each site to the overall average equally.

[b]These questions were asked of only those respondents who had worked within one year of the survey (sample size = 1,159).

[c]Respondents in St. Paul were not asked these questions.

[d]Respondents who stated that the following was true or very true: "You risked your health or safety doing this work."

[e]Respondents who stated that the following was true or very true: "The job security was good; that is, you could pretty much count on having this work."

[f]Respondents who stated that the following was true or very true: "The number of hours you worked each week was always changing."

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Appendix Table A.3

Health-Related Characteristics and Violence/Safety Issues of Jobs-Plus Survey Respondents, by Site

Characteristic	All[a]	Baltimore: Gilmor Homes	Chattanooga: Harriet Tubman Homes	Cleveland: Woodhill Homes Estates	Dayton: DeSoto Bass Courts	Los Angeles: Los Angeles: Imperial Courts	Los Angeles: William Mead Homes	St. Paul: Mt. Airy Homes	Seattle: Rainier Vista
Health-related characteristics[e]									
In fair or poor health	30.0 ***	31.9	27.1	27.6	26.1	33.8	44.0	n/a	49.7
Health condition limits work or type of work	29.2 *	29.6	29.4	24.0	25.1	26.1	28.3	36.2	34.8
If respondent reported alcohol or drug use past year: having problems/people complained about use	5.7	14.3	5.5	6.4	6.1	4.2	6.3	n/a	2.6
Scale score[b] (range = 0 to 2)	0.5 ***	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.7	n/a	0.8
For most of the past week, respondent felt:									
Sad	22.4	31.9	25.6	27.2	25.3	20.6	26.7	n/a	21.7
Could not shake off the blues, even with help	18.5 **	25.9	22.9	24.2	24.2	14.7	20.7	n/a	15.3
Lonely	22.5 *	31.9	27.6	27.6	26.2	25.5	24.5	n/a	16.6
Depressed	25.8 ***	37.5	28.4	33.7	32.9	28.9	26.6	n/a	18.4
Scale score[c] (range = 0 to 4)	0.9 **	1.3	1.0	1.1	1.1	0.9	1.0	n/a	0.7
Violence/safety issues[e] (%)									
Reported violence/abuse by someone close, past 12 months (any):	13.6 ***	20.4	23.0	18.0	24.2	12.7	5.6	n/a	5.1
Was threatened with physical harm	7.2 ***	9.8	10.8	9.4	15.3	6.9	3.0	n/a	2.5
Was hit, slapped, kicked, or physically harmed	4.9 ***	5.1	10.3	6.5	10.2	3.9	2.6	n/a	0.6
Was abused physically, emotionally, or sexually	8.8 ***	13.1	16.9	11.8	15.3	6.4	3.0	n/a	3.8
Reported feeling somewhat or very unsafe:									
Being outdoors alone, near unit during day	11.6 ***	25.0	5.6	6.9	13.9	22.5	15.9	n/a	3.2
Near unit after dark	42.4 ***	62.8	38.3	46.5	52.5	50.5	50.4	n/a	38.5
Going to surrounding neighborhood alone during day	15.8 ***	29.2	9.9	13.1	16.9	27.5	26.4	n/a	3.8
Alone at night	51.7 ***	66.8	48.1	53.6	64.5	64.2	65.2	n/a	51.3
Using public transportation during day	9.7 ***	10.9	8.1	8.0	7.8	20.7	19.7	n/a	2.0
At night	44.7 ***	53.1	35.9	48.7	49.8	62.6	66.4	n/a	41.5
Scale score[d] (range = 0 to 6)	1.8 ***	2.5	1.5	1.8	2.1	2.5	2.5	n/a	1.4
Sample size	1,689	218	220	252	241	208	237	153	160

(continued)

Appendix Table A.3 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Jobs-Plus baseline survey.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * = 10 percent; ** = 5 percent; *** = 1 percent.

Scale scores represent the sum of items affirmed by respondents. Scales were determined through factor analysis.

[a]The "all" column presents the average of the averages across the eight developments rather than a true average across all respondents. This was a methodological decision intended to weight the contribution of each site to the overall average equally.

[b]This scale did not include the item related to alcohol/drug use. Cronbach's alpha for this scale is .63.

[c]Cronbach's alpha for this scale is .84.

[d]Cronbach's alpha for this scale is .78.

[e]Respondents from St. Paul, MN, were not asked these survey questions, with the exception of the question about health conditions that may limit work or type of work.

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Appendix Table A.4

Jobs-Plus Survey Respondents' Perceptions of the Labor Market, by Site

Characteristic	All[a]	Baltimore: Gilmor Homes	Chattanooga: Harriet Tubman Homes	Cleveland: Woodhill Homes Estates	Dayton: DeSoto Bass Courts	Los Angeles: Los Angeles: Imperial Courts	Los Angeles: William Mead Homes	St. Paul: Mt. Airy Homes	Seattle: Rainier Vista
Reasons for difficulty in finding a job[b,e] (%)									
Lack of qualifications	64.0 ***	70.8	76.7	67.7	67.1	76.8	83.3	n/a	69.4
Not knowing how to find a job	33.1 ***	30.0	32.9	26.2	27.4	38.7	58.3	n/a	51.6
Problems reading, writing, or speaking English	25.9 ***	15.2	15.3	13.4	11.6	34.6	67.8	n/a	49.4
Problems in personal life	37.7 *	41.2	40.7	38.2	41.1	43.7	42.6	n/a	54.1
Racial/ethnic discrimination	45.4 ***	51.4	57.3	46.3	48.5	56.2	63.2	n/a	40.4
Being a public housing resident	19.5 ***	23.1	25.5	21.2	18.1	29.4	27.6	n/a	11.3
Scale score[c] (range = 0 to 6 reasons)	2.2 ***	2.3	2.5	2.1	2.1	2.7	3.5	n/a	2.7
Concerns associated with working full time[b] (%)									
Making sure children okay while at work[e]	23.6 ***	19.0	16.6	25.7	26.8	25.9	42.0	n/a	33.1
Traveling to and from work	19.1 ***	14.5	18.6	15.7	13.9	24.0	20.7	27.5	17.8
Worrying about safety traveling after dark	39.3 ***	42.1	30.7	40.9	38.5	52.2	46.8	35.9	27.6
Arranging for repairs at unit	20.4 ***	35.7	24.7	27.9	19.2	17.2	17.7	10.6	10.3
Losing benefits because making too much money	27.6 **	31.6	31.8	27.7	35.3	23.5	22.2	22.6	26.1
Rent would be raised because making too much money	46.0 ***	52.6	57.0	39.8	56.7	38.2	37.0	45.6	41.4
Having friends and relatives asking for money	21.9 ***	26.0	25.6	27.4	25.6	29.4	19.6	9.3	12.1
Scale score[d] (range = 0 to 7 concerns)	1.6	1.7	1.8	1.8	2.0	1.9	1.9	0.0	1.6
Sample size	1,689	218	220	252	241	208	237	153	160

(continued)

Appendix Table A.4 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Jobs-Plus baseline survey.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * = 10 percent; ** = 5 percent; *** = 1 percent.

[a]The "all" column presents the average of the averages across the eight developments rather than a true average across all respondents. This was a methodological decision intended to weight the contribution of each site to the overall average equally.

[b]Items representing discouragement of work efforts were reversed for inclusion in the scale score. Therefore, this scale score represents the average number of encouraging (positive) items affirmed by respondents.

[c]Cronbach's alpha for this scale is .64.

[d]Cronbach's alpha for this scale is .61.

[e]Respondents in St. Paul, MN, were not asked these survey questions.

Appendix Table A.5

Social Supports and Social Networks of Jobs-Plus Survey Respondents, by Site

Characteristic	All[a]		Baltimore: Gilmor Homes	Chattanooga: Harriet Tubman Homes	Cleveland: Woodhill Homes Estates	Dayton: DeSoto Bass Courts	Los Angeles: Imperial Courts	Los Angeles: William Mead Homes	St. Paul: Mt. Airy Homes	Seattle: Rainier Vista
All or most adults whom respondent knows well in the development[b,c] (%):										
Currently have full-time, steady paid work	12.3	***	9.3	20.1	10.4	11.4	12.0	15.5	n/a	19.4
Have had full-time, steady work in past year	14.4	***	8.1	24.3	12.8	16.3	16.4	15.7	n/a	21.4
Would be a good source of information about finding a job	15.2		12.2	22.6	18.5	17.0	18.8	17.1	n/a	15.9
All or most adults whom respondent knows well outside the development[c,d] (%):										
Currently have full-time, steady paid work	47.6	***	53.4	58.3	64.9	59.4	48.3	53.2	n/a	43.2
Have had full-time, steady work in past year	48.4	***	55.4	61.1	64.0	63.3	51.3	50.9	n/a	41.3
Would be a good source of information about finding a job	38.8	***	46.8	48.1	49.6	53.7	42.8	37.1	n/a	32.7
No adult relative or friends live in development	46.5	***	55.8	39.3	52.8	51.9	42.5	44.1	46.4	39.5
Respondents reporting that any adult whom they are close to (%):										
Provided encouragement to work, look for work, or attend job-related programs or classes	64.1	***	66.4	69.8	73.0	73.0	66.8	56.4	44.4	62.8
Helped in finding out about job openings or available work	62.4	***	63.7	68.4	70.7	69.7	68.2	51.6	52.0	54.8
Helped in ways that would make it easier to work or look for work	51.2	***	54.2	59.6	52.5	58.3	53.8	47.6	29.4	54.5
Made respondent feel as though she should not work	8.3		9.8	10.2	5.7	8.9	10.4	10.6	5.9	4.5
Failed to help with things like child care, transportation, chores, etc.	24.9	***	26.4	30.5	28.4	30.8	28.0	16.9	22.2	16.1
Did things that made it difficult to attend/complete programs or classes that would help get a job	17.0		17.5	17.3	15.1	19.9	18.5	14.7	16.3	16.8
Prevented respondent from finding a job or going to work	7.6		8.5	9.3	9.4	6.8	9.0	10.2	3.9	3.9
Caused respondent to lose or quit a job	5.8	***	4.7	11.7	9.3	5.9	4.5	3.6	3.3	3.2
Scale score[e] (range = 0 to 8)	6.1	***	6.2	6.2	6.3	6.3	6.2	6.0	5.7	6.3
Sample size	1,689		218	220	252	241	208	237	153	160

(continued)

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Appendix Table A.5 (continued)

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Jobs-Plus baseline survey.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * = 10 percent; ** = 5 percent; *** = 1 percent.

Scale scores represent the sum of items affirmed by respondents. Scales were determined through factor analysis.

[a]The "all" column presents the average of the averages across the eight developments rather than a true average across all respondents. This was a methodological decision intended to weight the contribution of each site to the overall average equally.

[b]The exact wording of the question was: "This question concerns adults outside of your own household. Of the other adults in [development] that you know well, would you say all, most, some, hardly any, or none...?"

[c]Respondents in St. Paul, MN, were not asked these survey questions.

[d]The exact wording of the question was: "Now thinking about your adult relatives and good friends outside of [development], would you say all, most, some, hardly any, or none...?"

[e]Items representing discouragement of work efforts were reversed for inclusion in the scale score. Therefore, this scale score represents the average number of encouraging (positive) items affirmed by respondents. Cronbach's alpha for this scale is .46.

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Appendix Table A.6

Reservation Wage and Job Search Efforts of Jobs-Plus Survey Respondents, by Site

Characteristic	All[a]	Baltimore: Gilmor Homes	Chattanooga: Harriet Tubman Homes	Cleveland: Woodhill Homes Estates	Dayton: DeSoto Bass Courts	Los Angeles: Imperial Courts	Los Angeles: William Mead Homes	St. Paul: Mt. Airy Homes	Seattle: Rainier Vista
Reservation wage[b] ($)	9.36	11.23	7.83	8.53	9.31	9.16	9.85	9.01	9.95
Job search activity (%)									
Searched for work, past four weeks	32.6 ***	37.0	36.4	37.3	40.2	36.7	28.4	26.8	17.5
Interviewed/spoke with employers, past four weeks[c]	19.0 ***	22.7	21.0	19.3	26.6	18.8	14.4	19.0	10.6
Searched for work, past 12 months[d]	66.1 ***	64.0	78.8	77.1	76.9	68.5	62.4	60.4	41.1
Sample size	1,689	218	220	252	241	208	237	153	160

SOURCE: MDRC calculations from Jobs-Plus baseline survey.

NOTES: Statistical significance levels are indicated as: * = 10 percent; ** = 5 percent; *** = 1 percent.

[a]The "all" column presents the average of the averages across the eight developments rather than a true average across all respondents. This was a methodological decision intended to weight the contribution of each site to the overall average equally.

[b]Respondents were asked the minimum wage rate they would accept if offered a full-time job that included medical benefits.

[c]This question was asked of respondents who reported searching for work in the past four weeks.

[d]This question was not asked of respondents who were employed at the time of the survey.

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Recent Publications on MDRC Projects

Note: For works not published by MDRC, the publisher's name is shown in parentheses. With a few exceptions, this list includes reports published by MDRC since 1999. A complete publications list is available from MDRC and on its Web site (www.mdrc.org), from which copies of MDRC's publications can also be downloaded.

Reforming Welfare and Making Work Pay

Next Generation Project

A collaboration among researchers at MDRC and several other leading research institutions focused on studying the effects of welfare, antipoverty, and employment policies on children and families.

How Welfare and Work Policies Affect Children: A Synthesis of Research. 2001. Pamela Morris, Aletha Huston, Greg Duncan, Danielle Crosby, Johannes Bos.

How Welfare and Work Policies Affect Employment and Income: A Synthesis of Research. 2001. Dan Bloom, Charles Michalopoulos.

How Welfare and Work Policies for Parents Affect Adolescents: A Synthesis of Research. 2002. Lisa A. Gennetian, Greg J. Duncan, Virginia W. Knox, Wanda G. Vargas, Elizabeth Clark-Kauffman, Andrew S. London.

ReWORKing Welfare: Technical Assistance for States and Localities

A multifaceted effort to assist states and localities in designing and implementing their welfare reform programs. The project includes a series of "how-to" guides, conferences, briefings, and customized, in-depth technical assistance.

After AFDC: Welfare-to-Work Choices and Challenges for States. 1997. Dan Bloom.

Work First: How to Implement an Employment-Focused Approach to Welfare Reform. 1997. Amy Brown.

Business Partnerships: How to Involve Employers in Welfare Reform. 1998. Amy Brown, Maria Buck, Erik Skinner.

Promoting Participation: How to Increase Involvement in Welfare-to-Work Activities. 1999. Gayle Hamilton, Susan Scrivener.

Encouraging Work, Reducing Poverty: The Impact of Work Incentive Programs. 2000. Gordon Berlin.

Steady Work and Better Jobs: How to Help Low-Income Parents Sustain Employment and Advance in the Workforce. 2000. Julie Strawn, Karin Martinson.

Beyond Work First: How to Help Hard-to-Employ Individuals Get Jobs and Succeed in the Workforce. 2001. Amy Brown.

Project on Devolution and Urban Change

A multiyear study in four major urban counties — Cuyahoga County, Ohio (which includes the city of Cleveland), Los Angeles, Miami-Dade, and Philadelphia — that examines how welfare reforms are being implemented and affect poor people, their neighborhoods, and the institutions that serve them.

Big Cities and Welfare Reform: Early Implementation and Ethnographic Findings from the Project on Devolution and Urban Change. 1999. Janet Quint, Kathryn Edin, Maria Buck, Barbara Fink, Yolanda Padilla, Olis Simmons-Hewitt, Mary Valmont.

Food Security and Hunger in Poor, Mother-Headed Families in Four U.S. Cities. 2000. Denise Polit, Andrew London, John Martinez.

Assessing the Impact of Welfare Reform on Urban Communities: The Urban Change Project and Methodological Considerations. 2000. Charles Michalopoulos, Johannes Bos, Robert Lalonde, Nandita Verma.

Post-TANF Food Stamp and Medicaid Benefits: Factors That Aid or Impede Their Receipt. 2001. Janet Quint, Rebecca Widom.

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Monitoring Outcomes for Cuyahoga County's Welfare Leavers: How Are They Faring? 2001. Nandita Verma, Claudia Coulton.

The Health of Poor Urban Women: Findings from the Project on Devolution and Urban Change. 2001. Denise Polit, Andrew London, John Martinez.

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Is Work Enough? The Experiences of Current and Former Welfare Mothers Who Work. 2001. Denise Polit, Rebecca Widom, Kathryn Edin, Stan Bowie, Andrew London, Ellen Scott, Abel Valenzuela.

Readying Welfare Recipients for Work: Lessons from Four Big Cities as They Implement Welfare Reform. 2002. Thomas Brock, Laura Nelson, Megan Reiter.

Welfare Reform in Cleveland: Implementation, Effects, and Experiences of Poor Families and Neighborhoods. 2002. Thomas Brock, Claudia Coulton, Andrew London, Denise Polit, Lashawn Richburg-Hayes, Ellen Scott, Nandita Verma.

Wisconsin Works

This study examines how Wisconsin's welfare-to-work program, one of the first to end welfare as an entitlement, is administered in Milwaukee.

Complaint Resolution in the Context of Welfare Reform: How W-2 Settles Disputes. 2001. Suzanne Lynn.

Exceptions to the Rule: The Implementation of 24-Month Time-Limit Extensions in W-2. 2001. Susan Gooden, Fred Doolittle.

Matching Applicants with Services: Initial Assessments in the Milwaukee County W-2 Program. 2001. Susan Gooden, Fred Doolittle, Ben Glispie.

Employment Retention and Advancement Project

Conceived and funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), this demonstration project is aimed at testing various ways to help low-income people find, keep, and advance in jobs.

New Strategies to Promote Stable Employment and Career Progression: An Introduction to the Employment Retention and Advancement Project (HHS). 2002. Dan Bloom, Jacquelyn Anderson, Melissa Wavelet, Karen Gardiner, Michael Fishman.

Time Limits

Welfare Time Limits: State Policies, Implementation, and Effects on Families. 2002. Dan Bloom, Mary Farrell, Barbara Fink.

Florida's Family Transition Program

An evaluation of Florida's initial time-limited welfare program, which includes services, requirements, and financial work incentives intended to reduce long-term welfare receipt and help welfare recipients find and keep jobs.

The Family Transition Program: Implementation and Three-Year Impacts of Florida's Initial Time-Limited Welfare Program. 1999. Dan Bloom, Mary Farrell, James Kemple, Nandita Verma.

The Family Transition Program: Final Report on Florida's Initial Time-Limited Welfare Program. 2000. Dan Bloom, James Kemple, Pamela Morris, Susan Scrivener, Nandita Verma, Richard Hendra.

Cross-State Study of Time-Limited Welfare

An examination of the implementation of some of the first state-initiated time-limited welfare programs.

Welfare Time Limits: An Interim Report Card. 1999. Dan Bloom.

Connecticut's Jobs First Program

An evaluation of Connecticut's statewide time-limited welfare program, which includes financial work incentives and requirements to participate in employment-related services aimed at rapid job placement. This study provides some of the earliest information on the effects of time limits in major urban areas.

Connecticut Post-Time Limit Tracking Study: Six-Month Survey Results. 1999. Jo Anna Hunter-Manns, Dan Bloom.

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Final Report on Connecticut's Welfare Reform Initiative. 2002. Dan Bloom, Susan Scrivener, Charles Michalopoulos, Pamela Morris, Richard Hendra, Diana Adams-Ciardullo, Johanna Walter.

Vermont's Welfare Restructuring Project

An evaluation of Vermont's statewide welfare reform program, which includes a work requirement after a certain period of welfare receipt, and financial work incentives.

Forty-Two Month Impacts of Vermont's Welfare Restructuring Project. 1999. Richard Hendra, Charles Michalopoulos.

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Financial Incentives

Encouraging Work, Reducing Poverty: The Impact of Work Incentive Programs. 2000. Gordon Berlin.

Minnesota Family Investment Program
An evaluation of Minnesota's pilot welfare reform initiative, which aims to encourage work, alleviate poverty, and reduce welfare dependence.

Reforming Welfare and Rewarding Work: Final Report on the Minnesota Family Investment Program. 2000:
Volume 1: Effects on Adults. Cynthia Miller, Virginia Knox, Lisa Gennetian, Martey Dodoo, Jo Anna Hunter, Cindy Redcross.
Volume 2: Effects on Children. Lisa Gennetian, Cynthia Miller.

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A test of a community-based, work-focused antipoverty program and welfare alternative operating in Milwaukee.

New Hope for People with Low Incomes: Two-Year Results of a Program to Reduce Poverty and Reform Welfare. 1999. Johannes Bos, Aletha Huston, Robert Granger, Greg Duncan, Thomas Brock, Vonnie McLoyd.

Canada's Self-Sufficiency Project
A test of the effectiveness of a temporary earnings supplement on the employment and welfare receipt of public assistance recipients. Reports on the Self-Sufficiency Project are available from: Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC), 275 Slater St., Suite 900, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5H9, Canada. Tel.: 613-237-4311; Fax: 613-237-5045. In the United States, the reports are also available from MDRC.

Does SSP Plus Increase Employment? The Effect of Adding Services to the Self-Sufficiency Project's Financial Incentives (SRDC). 1999. Gail Quets, Philip Robins, Elsie Pan, Charles Michalopoulos, David Card.

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National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies
Conceived and sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), with support from the U.S. Department of Education (ED), this is the largest-scale evaluation ever conducted of different strategies for moving people from welfare to employment.

Do Mandatory Welfare-to-Work Programs Affect the Well-Being of Children? A Synthesis of Child Research Conducted as Part of the National Evaluation of Welfare-to-Work Strategies (HHS/ED). 2000. Gayle Hamilton.

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An evaluation of Los Angeles's refocused GAIN (welfare-to-work) program, which emphasizes rapid employment. This is the first in-depth study of a full-scale "work first" program in one of the nation's largest urban areas.

The Los Angeles Jobs-First GAIN Evaluation: First-Year Findings on Participation Patterns and Impacts. 1999. Stephen Freedman, Marisa Mitchell, David Navarro.

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An evaluation of Ohio's Learning, Earning, and Parenting (LEAP) Program, which uses financial incentives to encourage teenage parents on welfare to stay in or return to school.

LEAP: Final Report on Ohio's Welfare Initiative to Improve School Attendance Among Teenage Parents. 1997. Johannes Bos, Veronica Fellerath.

New Chance Demonstration
A test of a comprehensive program of services that seeks to improve the economic status and general well-being of a group of highly disadvantaged young women and their children.

New Chance: Final Report on a Comprehensive Program for Young Mothers in Poverty and Their Children. 1997. Janet Quint, Johannes Bos, Denise Polit.

Parenting Behavior in a Sample of Young Mothers in Poverty: Results of the New Chance Observational Study. 1998. Martha Zaslow, Carolyn Eldred, editors.

Focusing on Fathers

Parents' Fair Share Demonstration
A demonstration for unemployed noncustodial parents (usually fathers) of children on welfare. PFS aims to improve the men's employment and earnings, reduce child poverty by increasing child support payments, and assist the fathers in playing a broader constructive role in their children's lives.

Fathers' Fair Share: Helping Poor Men Manage Child Support and Fatherhood (Russell Sage Foundation). 1999. Earl Johnson, Ann Levine, Fred Doolittle.

Parenting and Providing: The Impact of Parents' Fair Share on Paternal Involvement. 2000. Virginia Knox, Cindy Redcross.

Working and Earning: The Impact of Parents' Fair Share on Low-Income Fathers' Employment. 2000. John M. Martinez, Cynthia Miller.

The Responsible Fatherhood Curriculum. 2000. Eileen Hayes, with Kay Sherwood.

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Career Academies: Impacts on Students' Initial Transitions to Post-Secondary Education and Employment. 2001. James Kemple.

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This demonstration and research project looks at First Things First, a whole-school reform that combines a variety of best practices aimed at raising achievement and graduation rates in both urban and rural settings.

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Project GRAD

This evaluation examines Project GRAD, an education initiative targeted at urban schools and combining a number of proven or promising reforms.

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LILAA Initiative

This study of the Literacy in Libraries Across America (LILAA) initiative explores the efforts of five adult literacy programs in public libraries to improve learner persistence.

So I Made Up My Mind: Introducing a Study of Adult Learner Persistence in Library Literacy Programs. 2000. John T. Comings, Sondra Cuban.

"I Did It for Myself": Studying Efforts to Increase Adult Learner Persistence in Library Literacy Programs. 2001. John Comings, Sondra Cuban, Johannes Bos, Catherine Taylor.

Toyota Families in Schools

A discussion of the factors that determine whether an impact analysis of a social program is feasible and warranted, using an evaluation of a new family literacy initiative as a case study.

An Evaluability Assessment of the Toyota Families in Schools Program. 2001. Janet Quint.

Project Transition

A demonstration program that tested a combination of school-based strategies to facilitate students' transition from middle school to high school.

Project Transition: Testing an Intervention to Help High School Freshmen Succeed. 1999. Janet Quint, Cynthia Miller, Jennifer Pastor, Rachel Cytron.

Equity 2000

Equity 2000 is a nationwide initiative sponsored by the College Board to improve low-income students' access to college. The MDRC paper examines the implementation of Equity 2000 in Milwaukee Public Schools.

Getting to the Right Algebra: The Equity 2000 Initiative in Milwaukee Public Schools. 1999. Sandra Ham, Erica Walker.

School-to-Work Project

A study of innovative programs that help students make the transition from school to work or careers.

Home-Grown Lessons: Innovative Programs Linking School and Work (Jossey-Bass Publishers). 1995. Edward Pauly, Hilary Kopp, Joshua Haimson.

Home-Grown Progress: The Evolution of Innovative School-to-Work Programs. 1997. Rachel Pedraza, Edward Pauly, Hilary Kopp.

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A multisite effort to greatly increase employment among public housing residents.

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Building a Convincing Test of a Public Housing Employment Program Using Non-Experimental Methods: Planning for the Jobs-Plus Demonstration. 1999. Howard Bloom.

Jobs-Plus Site-by-Site: An Early Look at Program Implementation. 2000. Edited by Susan Philipson Bloom with Susan Blank.

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The Special Challenges of Offering Employment Programs in Culturally Diverse Communities: The Jobs-Plus Experience in Public Housing Developments. 2002. Linda Kato.

The Employment Experiences of Public Housing Residents: Findings from the Jobs-Plus Baseline Survey. 2002. John Martinez.

Neighborhood Jobs Initiative

An initiative to increase employment in a number of low-income communities.

The Neighborhood Jobs Initiative: An Early Report on the Vision and Challenges of Bringing an Employment Focus to a Community-Building Initiative. 2001. Frieda Molina, Laura Nelson.

Structures of Opportunity: Developing the Neighborhood Jobs Initiative in Fort Worth, Texas. 2002. Tony Proscio.

Connections to Work Project

A study of local efforts to increase competition in the choice of providers of employment services for welfare recipients and other low-income populations. The project also provides assistance to cutting-edge local initiatives aimed at helping such people access and secure jobs.

Designing and Administering a Wage-Paying Community Service Employment Program Under TANF: Some Considerations and Choices. 1999. Kay Sherwood.

San Francisco Works: Toward an Employer-Led Approach to Welfare Reform and Workforce Development. 2000. Steven Bliss.

Canada's Earnings Supplement Project

A test of an innovative financial incentive intended to expedite the reemployment of displaced workers and encourage full-year work by seasonal or part-year workers, thereby also reducing receipt of Unemployment Insurance.

Testing a Re-employment Incentive for Displaced Workers: The Earnings Supplement Project. 1999. Howard Bloom, Saul Schwartz, Susanna Lui-Gurr, Suk-Won Lee.

MDRC Working Papers on Research Methodology

A new series of papers that explore alternative methods of examining the implementation and impacts of programs and policies.

Building a Convincing Test of a Public Housing Employment Program Using Non-Experimental Methods: Planning for the Jobs-Plus Demonstration. 1999. Howard Bloom.

Estimating Program Impacts on Student Achievement Using "Short" Interrupted Time Series. 1999. Howard Bloom.

Using Cluster Random Assignment to Measure Program Impacts: Statistical Implications for the Evaluation of Education Programs. 1999. Howard Bloom, Johannes Bos, Suk-Won Lee.

Measuring the Impacts of Whole School Reforms: Methodological Lessons from an Evaluation of Accelerated Schools. 2001. Howard Bloom.

The Politics of Random Assignment: Implementing Studies and Impacting Policy. 2000. Judith Gueron.

Modeling the Performance of Welfare-to-Work Programs: The Effects of Program Management and Services, Economic Environment, and Client Characteristics. 2001. Howard Bloom, Carolyn Hill, James Riccio.

A Regression-Based Strategy for Defining Subgroups in a Social Experiment. 2001. James Kemple, Jason Snipes.

Extending the Reach of Randomized Social Experiments: New Directions in Evaluations of American Welfare-to-Work and Employment Initiatives. 2001. James Riccio, Howard Bloom.

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The Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan social policy research organization. We are dedicated to learning what works to improve the well-being of low-income people. Through our research and the active communication of our findings, we seek to enhance the effectiveness of social policies and programs. MDRC was founded in 1974 and is located in New York City and Oakland, California.

MDRC's current projects focus on welfare and economic security, education, and employment and community initiatives. Complementing our evaluations of a wide range of welfare reforms are new studies of supports for the working poor and emerging analyses of how programs affect children's development and their families' well-being. In the field of education, we are testing reforms aimed at improving the performance of public schools, especially in urban areas. Finally, our community projects are using innovative approaches to increase employment in low-income neighborhoods.

Our projects are a mix of demonstrations — field tests of promising program models — and evaluations of government and community initiatives, and we employ a wide range of methods to determine a program's effects, including large-scale studies, surveys, case studies, and ethnographies of individuals and families. We share the findings and lessons from our work — including best practices for program operators — with a broad audience within the policy and practitioner community, as well as the general public and the media.

Over the past quarter century, MDRC has worked in almost every state, all of the nation's largest cities, and Canada. We conduct our projects in partnership with state and local governments, the federal government, public school systems, community organizations, and numerous private philanthropies.

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